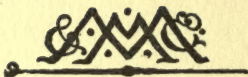








I WONDER



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# I WONDER

*Essays for the Young People*

BY THE WRITER OF

"CONFESSIO MEDICI"

*Paquet, Stephen*

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TO MY GRANDCHILD  
S. J. P. HOWARTH  
I AM PERMITTED  
TO DEDICATE  
THESE LITTLE ESSAYS





“When she was half-a-dozen years younger, Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day by saying, ‘Tom, I wonder’—upon which Mr. Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light, and said, ‘Louisa, never wonder!’ Herein lay the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections. Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder . . . There was a library in Coketown, to which general access was easy. Mr. Gradgrind greatly tormented his mind about what the people read in this library. It was a disheartening circumstance, but a melancholy fact, that even these readers persisted in wondering. They wondered about human nature, human passions, human hopes and fears, the struggles, triumphs, and defeats, the cares and joys and sorrows, the lives and deaths, of common men and women.”

DICKENS, in *Hard Times*.





## PREFACE

THERE comes a time in your life, when you play as it were a game of cards against Faith. It is the oldest of all games. You and she, across the green table of Earth, are confronted ; and the rule is, that you play first. You sit and stare, across the table, at the backs of her cards. You have a strong hand : you hold the cruelty of Nature, and the iniquities of Man : the facts of drink, insanity, inherited disease : the misery of the unemployed. What a hand you have got, what a hand ! Come, you begin. *Those eighteen, on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them*—try that card. The game sways now to you, now to her, till the fan of your hand is thinned. You will find that she, no less than you, has a strong hand, stronger than you thought : and, if you live long enough, she is likely to win. For she holds, with much else that is worth having, certain cards which you will never beat : and she is an old and skilful player. Be careful to keep your temper over the game : and, of course, you play not for money but for Love.





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# I WONDER

## I

### THE WAY OF WONDER

THIS much I remember of Aristotle, that he calls Wonder the beginning of the love of Wisdom. To have a right judgment of our surroundings, we must wonder at them, and be surprised that they and we are met together. So long as we exercise this quickening sense of wonder, there is hope for us, and some justification of our presence here, because we are on the road that leads toward wisdom : and they alone are incorrigible fools, to whom Nature comes natural. Once we have fallen into the bad habit of taking for granted what Nature grants us, and have ceased to be amazed, it may fairly be said that in the midst of life we are in death. For one might as well be dead as alive, to look with dull eyes at the world, not finding it wonderful.

So excellent is Wonder, that we must not profane its name in common use. For example, there is the phrase, *I wonder if*. Be sure that he or she,

who thus turns a sentence, is untidy of speech, and regardless of the rights of words. It is impossible, to wonder if: you are not thinking, nor trying to think. *I wonder if it will be fine to-morrow*: you could hardly find a worse phrase. Never wonder if: always wonder at. The dawn of one more day, wet or fine, is wonderful: if it be fine, wonder at the sunshine; if it be wet, at the rain, each drop a miracle. *I wonder if* is not worth saying, not worth answering. It is something said for the sake of saying something to hide the cheapness of something said. *How cold it is—I wonder if it is going to snow.* Here, if guinea-pigs could talk, might be the level of their conversation.

Avoid, with equal care, the phrase, *The wonder is*. Grandpapa, for example, slips on the stairs, and hurts himself. *The wonder is, that he did not hurt himself more.* It is not. The wonder is, that Grandpapa did hurt himself. All pain is infinitely wonderful: but there is no wonder in the measured severity of this or that accident. It was not possible that he should hurt himself more. Given his weight, the velocity of his descent, the density of the stairs, and the state of his tissues, you might calculate the harm done, working out each bruise, by algebra, on a black-board. To wonder that he did not hurt himself more is like wondering that two and two do not make five. His injury was his share of the universe at the moment of his accident: it was

bound, therefore, to be exactly what it was. Otherwise, not he, but the universe, would have been confounded. The universe, in accordance with its eternal principles, upset Grandpapa. If he had hurt himself more, ever so little more, he would have upset the universe. Wonder yourself silly, not over the amount, but over the fact of his pain : wonder at what did happen, not at what might have happened, if it could have happened.

Now that we are past *I wonder if* and *The wonder is*, we come to *I wonder when* and *I wonder where*. Say these phrases to yourself, slowly, with your eyes shut, and watch the images that rise in your mind, how quick they take shape, and fight for precedence. Ghosts of letters that ought to have reached you the day before yesterday, ghosts of umbrellas that ought to have been in the stand in the hall, beset you ; and you are haunted by dismal memories of people who were late, and of belongings that were lost. You are waiting for a friend ; and the cabs go up and down the street, but none of them stops where you are at the window. You are hunting for your gloves, sure that you put them there, where they are not. Minute by minute, as you wait, as you hunt, the clock tells you that so much more of your life is fled. The misery of it, that your life should be ebbing away, while you are looking for a pair of old gloves. *I wonder when he will come*, you say ; or, *I wonder where they are* : and echo answers,



that your friend will come *when he will come*, and that your gloves are *where they are*. Avoid, by these two instances, the fault of wondering when and where: make up your mind, that you will only wonder at.

It is the advice which Aristotle was about to give you when I interrupted him. Wonder, says he, is the beginning, the ruling principle, of the love of Wisdom. That which makes us Man, our birthright, our privilege, is just a sense of surprise that we are in the world. To think, we must be challenged, entrapped, stung into thought, by all that we have and are. Every inch and every moment of this world, all its aspects and performances, and every act of our senses, invite us to look into their significance; calling us, if not to a *Credo*, yet to an *Admiror*. All facts, from stars to blades of grass, from the death of Cæsar to the death of a mouse, are for wonder, and thereby for thought: and the only way toward wisdom is that which begins at the gate of Surprise, and goes along the dim groves of Bewilderment. "Into the Kingdom of Science, as into the Kingdom of Heaven, we cannot enter, but as little children." To have the run of both kingdoms, to know them well enough to be sure that they are not two but one, is wisdom: and the entry into them requires the child's mind, its love of a mystery, its readiness to be puzzled, its open-eyed astonishment. Watch how a baby takes notice. Its own fingers and toes, and

every sound and colour, bring it to attention. What is this? What is that? There was something; there is something else. Two somethings; and here a third. What a world. The wonder of it, that here are fingers, apart from toes: and here is Mother's breast, which is neither Daddy's face nor Nanny's apron. Thus, in a blind animal fashion, come the first beginnings of taking notice, taking thought. So, with us, wonder must precede reason: or we shall be, to the end of our lives, not wise, but fools.

The fool is he who takes for his motto *Nil admirari*: he does not wonder at anything. He chose this motto, suggested by the devil in a most red-hot moment, because he says in his heart that there is no God, nothing to wonder at. He is not surprised, not he, at Nature: he sees what is in his line of sight; and is sure that he can judge, from that, the rest of the show. You, of course, are the fool, to his thinking, because you wonder. You and your God, says he, just suit each other: your God was invented by primitive man, Caliban scared by the lightning, calling it Setebos. Point by point, says he, man elaborated God, always a large old personage up in the clouds amid thunder and lightning. That is what comes of wondering. Men went on wondering at Nature till they imagined God: and the pavements of the temples of Greece and Rome, and of Jerusalem, were slippery with blood, and hideous

with beasts kicking and gasping in death, to please God : which, all the time, was only the name for a man's fright at the sight of his own shadow. And that is all that there is, and quite enough for me, says the fool : and I wonder if and whether, and when and where, but I make it a point of honour, never to wonder at : and *Nil admirari* is the motto of my family.

What have we to say to him? For he is so well-informed, quick with references and authorities, expert in the use of history, criticism, and book-learning. He has had such a long innings, and drives the ball of Religion so high over the pavilion of Logic : and if you cannot get him out, with all your modern advantages, how can I? Let us put aside the hope that we shall argue him down : it will take us all our time to argue ourselves up. We have our motto, *Semper admirari* : let us see what comes of Wonder.

Only, we must begin at the very beginning, and go the way of Nature. She never preaches to us : it is we who preach to her. Nor does she tell us to "look through Nature up to Nature's God." It is not so easy to look through Nature. Nor does she bid us find her perfect : for, in Nature, fair is foul and foul is fair ; and, if she were perfect, she would not be here. One commandment, and no more, she gives us : that we read her name, Wonderful.



## II

### THE WONDER OF MATTER

THERE is a phrase in the marriage-service—*Oh God, who by thy mighty power hast made all things out of nothing*. This account of the origin of all things was received with happy laughter, in my young days, by Modern Thought : and you may still come across people who are sure that all things are made, not of nothing, but of something. To make things, they say, you must take enough something, and make them out of that. But the question is not of making things ; it is of making all things. To make all things, you would need not something, but everything. And, once you take everything to make all things, you are not, in reality, making anything. You might as well say that you are making money, when you change a shilling into two sixpences. The sculptor does not make the statue : he takes a block of marble, and destroys a lot of it, and the rest is the statue. Nor does the boot-maker make boots ; he puts them together, *particulam undique decerptam* : they are, in the true sense of the

word, ready-made. The only way to make all things, really to make them, is to make them out of nothing.

The marriage-service, at this point, rises high over the heads of some of its critics : and there you will find it, I hope, when you come within its immediate range. The wedding-guests mostly think it old-fashioned, and almost indelicate : but this man and this woman, in sharp isolation, side by side, with all the artillery of Earth and Heaven thundering about their ears, welcome a downright plain-spoken estimate of their predicament. For they are thinking that children may be born to them : and they get this answer, that the children, if they come, will “ come of the Lord ” ; and will be made, like all things, out of nothing. The service uses the past tense, *hast made* : it concedes that point to the congregation, who are not in a mood to be bothered with logic. But facts are above the reach of tenses : and we have to consider this bare statement, that God makes all things out of nothing. Here, in seven words, is a theory of things : but, What are things ? Let us ask Science to tell us that. For she loves it, when we come to her with questions of our own accord.

To hear some people talk of Science, you would think her a hard woman, cold and passionless. They say that she has put aside, without romance, without regret, all emotion, all tragedy and comedy, and all the fun of the fair. She has moments of

comparative affability, mostly in connection with modern architecture; posing over gateways, or between windows, in a shapeless robe and large sandals, with a pair of compasses or a big stone ball: but she never suffered, or loved, or enjoyed, or failed. That is how some people talk of her: whereas she is aching for sympathy, and for a way to our hearts. Think how dull it must be, to be called, year in and year out, inexorable, stern, immutable, exact; and all the time she is longing to leave her gateways and windows, yawn, stretch her cramped limbs, get out of her marble sandals, play conjuring-tricks with her ball, and gather us round her for a fairy-story. Come, let us charm her down—*Descend, be stone no more*. She hears; the gateway shakes, the windows rattle; there is a dust and a clatter of stucco, a rending asunder of tons of ugly masonry; she is here, she is come to life, to us, *et vera incessu patuit Dea*. Goddess, Madam, Lady Science, Miss, you Darling, here we are, come along here and sit right in the middle of us. Now, tell us, What is Things?

At the sound of a neuter noun in the plural with a verb in the singular, she laughs with delight, and hugs us all round: for she was born in Ancient Greece, and we, it seems, were speaking her beloved language. The trees is tall, the games is done, the clothes is gone to the wash: that is the Greek way of dealing with a neuter noun in the plural. Things,



to a Greek, not were, but was. Men and women were : but their limbs, bones, and bodies was. This use failed sometimes, because words is so obstinate : still, Greek does its best to uphold this good rule, that things not are but is. If thought be thinking of half-a-dozen things at once, then one they is. They cannot make themselves many, while thought is making them one. A thousand trees, to my thinking, is a wood : and my coat, waistcoat, and trousers is a suit of clothes. That is what they is, now that I think of them. Observe how this grammatical rule exalts and crowns Thought, and keeps Things to that station in life to which it has pleased God to call them. That is why Science was glad, when she heard, in our English, the echo of her Greek philosophy.

So she sits among us, laughing, with her hands clasped round her knees, as pretty as Circe in Mr. Briton Rivière's picture : and *Oh my dears*, she says, in a soft, lazy kind of voice, and shrugs her white shoulders, and laughs again, *Do let's be sensible. What's the use of thinking about Things, without thinking about Thought?* She took us aback : we had been expecting a fairy-story. So she relented, and told us a true story. First, I remember, she told us not to believe it because she said so, but to try for ourselves whether it were true. We must use our eyes. You who live in the town, she said, out with you into the streets : and you who live in the country, out with

you into the woods. Wherever you are, you see Things, which are of all sorts of colours. That was how she began. She made each of us take something ; one took a leaf, another took a neck-tie : I took a penny, and she made my part of the story out of that. I have it in my left hand, here, as I write. Pennies do well to be proud coins, for they are descended from the original tribute-money, the Thing that was Cæsar's. *Things* again ; as one might call the rates and taxes by that name. Cæsar, on my penny, is, by the Grace of God, King of all the Britains, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India. This alliance of the British Empire with Heaven is called *the heart of our King and Governor* : and the clipped superscription, *Dei Gra. Britt. Omn. Rex Fid. Def. Ind. Imp.*, is intended to make us read Bryce's Holy Roman Empire, and the Emperor's speech, in *Hernani*, before Charlemagne's tomb.

Brown, cold, hard, heavy, round, flat, and patterned on either side, is the penny. Brown, because it reflects that measure of light ; cold, because it absorbs that measure of heat ; and heavy, because it is of that measure of density. We are now come far from where we began. We are contemplating a body, a form of matter, a Thing of text-books, chemical experiments, and Christmas lectures at the Royal Institution ; a proper object of Wonder. Three pennies already : one for our use, one for our history, and one for our thoughts.

Take, first, the wonder of its colour. Imagine, if you can, a colourless world. It would be a world of blind folk, an earth invisible : we should live and die sniffing, tapping the road with sticks, listening to every little sound, and fumbling every inch of the way to our graves. Things colourless is Life eyeless : our world would be gone like a candle blown out, and we in the dark, in one long night from birth to death. It is colour, that makes and redeems the world. And behold, as I raise my eyes from the black and white of my writing, a rose-garden, and blue sky, and green trees against the blue sky.

Colour, of course, is not in Things, but in us. As the pain of a pin-prick is in us, not in the pin, so the colour of a rose is in us, not in the rose. There can no more be colour in a rose than pain in a pin. All colours are in us : and, unless we are here, they are not there. We are so made, that we translate light into colours ; the redness of a rose is waves of light, which are changed, in us, to a sense of red. Apart from perception, a rose has no colour ; there is none for it to have ; you might as well say that the reflection of your face is still in the mirror, because you saw it there this morning.

The scent of the rose, likewise, is in us, not in it. Particles, thrown from it, act on our olfactory nerves : and we translate this action into fragrance.

Get these facts by heart. Surely, the heart is a safer place than the head for all facts, especially for



such as belong to Science. Compel yourself to wonder at this conversion, in you, of waves into colour, of particles into fragrance. What is left of the rose, if it be a colourless, odourless Thing, not red unless you see it, nor fragrant unless you smell it ?

Take your courage in both hands, and make the great experiment. Go, at sunset, to the top of the hill, and look at the view. If it may be, go alone, and so high that you seem to be conscious of the very sphere of the earth. Twenty miles off is the sea, a soft haze, with a few white dots, which are sails, and one flashing spark, in and out, which is a light-house. The hills round you, fold beyond fold, are of many colours, green, brown, and purple, and on the horizon a faint line of pale amber, hardly separable from the air. In the recesses of the nearer hills, are the villages, each with its dim walls and thatch and church-tower, and its wreath of smoke. The roads are empty, save where the last of the day's motors, like a black insect, runs, and raises a track of grey dust. The hill-side presents a thousand pictures to you, in light or in shade ; a thousand arrangements of warm-coloured heather, bracken, gorse, and rock. The very ground under your feet is pictures ; you destroy them, standing or sitting on them. If only you could frame a few square yards of the heather, and have that picture in London ! But you came for nothing less than the sunset. Lie

flat on your back, and stare at the blue of the sky : let that gift of a single colour find its way to your heart ; learn one colour well. Then, read the clouds at sunset. All day long, they were mirrors of light in the sky, and flying shadows on the land : now they are become, at the last, mirrors of colours, yellow, orange, rose-red, scarlet, crimson, sapphire, opal, amethyst, with alternate shafts of light and darkness flung up and spread out among them ; till the sun is gone, and they put away their colours, and put on black for the end of the day. It is wonderful, how all these colours and contrasts are not where they seem to be, but in you.

As, in you, are all colours and all smells, so, in you, are all sounds : yes, and all sense of touch and resistance. Think what it is, to have in yourself, at one point of time, the warmth of the sun on your face, the stir of the wind blowing your hair about, the lark singing overhead, the sight of the open country, the smell of honeysuckle, and the feel of your feet on the road. Or take a London blend, in you, of sensations less pleasant but not less wonderful : any moment in a crowd or on a tram-car. It makes no difference, where you are. Alone in your bedroom, fourteen feet by ten by eight, you are still bidden, as a guest, by every inch of the wall-paper, by every sound from the street, and by every use of your sponge, soap, and tooth-brush, to that mystery-play which was acted, you being there, by the

sunset over the moor ; and, though you think that you are only a guest, you are, in reality, the whole theatre of the play. It could not happen without you : it happens in you.

Wherever you are, the play is there. If the wonder could be more at one time, less at another, the bedroom scene would be even more remarkable than the sunset scene. Any foolish creature can say Wonderful to a sunset : but you must have a fair measure of intelligence to say it to a sense of soap and of tooth-powder. Yet, as in pleasure so in wonder, there is virtue in simplicity. If the vision be too magnificent, as when you look at the stars, then wonder is confused with emotion : if it be too narrow or educational, as when you look through a microscope at the scales off a butterfly's wing, then wonder is confused with curiosity. What God has cleansed, that call not thou common : and what is there, that is not cleansed by your wonder ? Stand here, just here, on the way that leads to the love of wisdom, and you will call nothing common. The proper objects of wonder are just those odds and ends that we have in commonest use : our food and drink, our clothes, the furniture of our rooms, the contents of our pockets, the sounds about the house or in the street. Let us have no star-gazing, nor any peering through lenses. That which is before our eyes, in our hands, in our ears, under our noses, is the very stuff and fabric of wonder. Let

us be agreed that the wonders of the world may fairly be called God's work : but the wonder of the world is ours.

We have got thus far, that, as the pain of a pin-prick is not in the pin, and the comfortable feel of a hot-water bottle is not in the bottle, so colour, smell, and sound are not in Things, but in us. The taste of our food, and the noise of a barrel-organ, are in us, not in them. You are bound, by these and the like plain facts, to mend your childish idea of this world. You had in your mind a huge round bulk of stuff, painted all over, purple for seas, green and yellow-ochre for countries and deserts, white for polar ice and snow-mountains. It spun swiftly in a Cambridge-blue atmosphere. It exhaled all manner of smells, and made all manner of sounds. And these colours and smells and sounds were there, though the earth had been as void of life as the moon. They had nothing to do with perception, with our nerves and brains : they went on of themselves, apart from us, in the absence of us, all as real as real could be.

You must give up this picture-book world. You had in your thoughts not our real world, but a mere image of the old globe in the schoolroom, varnished and mounted for the service of geography. Our real world has no colours, no smells, no sounds. Our world is our senses in action. Not in Things, but in us, are those qualities which, at the invitation of our senses, we attribute to Things. Apart from



perception, there is neither colour nor fragrance in a rose : there is not even any smell (fancy that), nor any noise, in a motor.

You are left, it seems, with a new sort of world on your hands. The old painted, smelling, resounding world is gone ; and you have to make terms with a world which, if I may venture to say so, depends on you, and waits your pleasure. Its furniture, without you, is like instruments unplayed, letters unopened, seeds unplanted. You must be here, for your world to have its red roses, its tasty food, its friendly voices. Things are "bodies," bringing themselves to your notice, announcing their intentions, ringing you up on your nerves. You are the receiver of their wireless telegraphy. In you the world's messages find their destination, are translated, read, and registered. Here is no occasion for pride : still, it is honourable, to fashion that which is invisible into a sunset, and that which is inaudible into music.

Now advance, from the wonder of colour, smell, and sound, to the wonder of Matter itself. We all believe in Matter, and are sure that Things are made of it : they have weight, are solid, occupy space. Nelson's column, for example, is really in Trafalgar Square ; we are quite sure of that. Everything everywhere is really there : what is the good of wondering at Matter ?

For the conduct of our affairs, it is waste of time.

None the less, for thousands of years, men have sought the one cause of all Things, the one fabric of which they all are made, that which is the stars and the dust, the rocks and rivers, fires and gases, of the universe. It is our bodies, our food and clothing, the earth under our feet, the sky, and all else : in brief, it is that one stuff out of which the universe is compounded. How can we, who are children of men, drop the enquiry that was begun by Thales of Miletus ?

This, to the best of my recollection, was the story that Science told us, on the day when she came down and sat among us, laughing, and we asked her, What is Things ? We might believe it or not, she said, as we liked : anyhow, it was true. Then she went away : and, as she went, she advised us all to read Lucretius his poem on the Nature of Things. But I, wishing to behave handsomely, have been looking into my old History of Philosophy ; for I want to begin where she began, long before Lucretius.

It was Thales of Miletus, who said that the one Thing, of which all Things are made, is Water. He took the triune nature of ice, water, and steam, as the type or perfect instance of matter. Like water, now solid, now fluid, now vapour, so must matter be some shifty, mutable, pliant, subtle kind of stuff : like water, only more so. After him, came Heraclitus, who said that all Things are made of

Fire. As we use the word Spirit, not meaning by it wind or breath, so he used the word Fire, not meaning by it the kindling and consuming of fuel, but the blazing up and dying down of all that is in the universe. Upward, *in excelsis*, this universal element is God: downward, it is matter. Like flames rising and falling, so this Fire makes and unmakes and re-makes, incessantly, all Things. They go as fast as they come: they cease to be, so soon as they are: nothing stays, or is the same for two moments together, nor can you step down twice into the same stream: to be, is to change: and, if Things were to leave off changing, they would leave off being, and there would be an end of them. Heraclitus, born some five hundred years before Christ, is still alive: he has taken the name of Monism. After him, came Anaxagoras, and the Atomists. Things, they said, are permanent and real, for they are made of permanent real particles, or atoms: which is Greek for what is so small that you cannot cut it in half. Whatever God may be, said the Atomists, matter is really made of real atoms, immutable and imperishable: God is made of God, but Things are made of Things, and them so small that they cannot be smaller. The day they said that, Heaven created a new institution, the Most Noble Order of Science, and invested all of them. Out of wonder, they had come to be men of science. They had no instruments, made no

experiments : they just wondered at Things, till they discovered the atomic theory.

It is twenty-three hundred years, from Anaxagoras to Lord Kelvin and Sir J. J. Thomson. They, by experiments and mathematics and arguments above our comprehending, have "divided the atom." They have discovered that the one cause of all Things must be stated in terms of electricity, and must be measured by the measures of electricity. By this omnipresent force, the universe is put together and is driven. Millions of electrical units make an atom ; millions of atoms make a particle of matter ; millions of particles make some small Thing, such as a grain of pollen, flower-dust : you can see these pollen-grains with a microscope ; round, ribbed, thick-skinned begetters of next year's flowers, little fathers of more Things. Here is a discovery which exalts the wonder of matter past all imagining. *The world recedes, it disappears.* Long ago, men put away the notion of earth as a globe with colours and smells and sounds all its very own, apart from our perception of them : but they clung to the doctrine of Anaxagoras, that the atom was indivisible ; and behold, it has been divided into a million acts of one force, named after a bit of amber, such as Phœnician children used to play with, picking up threads and hairs. In brief, this earth is of a texture so fine that the very atoms are galvanic batteries, complex masses of electrical charges.



I look up again, from the black and white of ink and paper, to the garden. Rain is falling : the leaden sky, and the pale slanted lines of rain, and the blurred outlines of the trees, all are united, in me and by me, into a sense of the garden on a wet day : and, on this side of the window, another blend of sensations, of lighted wood and coals, has been added to the comfort of me and my dog. He and I, it seems, are thoroughly enjoying this Heraclitean world, where *nothing is but what is not*. For the present, I leave him out of the question : I will come back to him. The question is, whether I have or have not come any nearer, by all this thinking about Things, to the statement in the marriage-service, that they are made out of nothing.

I say that I have. The fact that roses are not red except they be seen, nor fragrant except they be smelt, justifies me in asserting that Things are made : and the fact that my share of Things would not be here, if I were not here, justifies me in asserting that my share of Things is made out of nothing : and, since everybody's share is made out of the same nothing, I say that all Things are made out of nothing. And, since this making of all Things out of nothing would be impossible if they were left to do it for themselves, Mind, somehow, must be doing it for them : and the marriage-service does not commit us to more than that measure of belief. It only repeats, in a very

simple form, what Saint John says of Reason, the Logos, or Word, "by Whom all Things were made."

I am glad to learn, from my old History of Philosophy, that Heraclitus, likewise, believed in the Word, and wrote of the Word, more than five hundred years before the Gospel according to Saint John. He calls it Understanding, Justice, Fate, God, the all-embracing Wordful and Mindful. My History of Philosophy is written by a German professor, translated by a Canadian professor, with additions by the president of an American college. I wish that I could have a talk with Heraclitus himself. "The doctrine of Heraclitus," says the German professor, "may be termed monistic, inasmuch as it represents the eternal reason as immanent in the world of individuality and change." Well, that is just the place where we should expect to find it. Eternal reason is bound to be in the world of individuality, or there would be no individuals: it is bound to be in the world of change, or nothing would ever change. There needs no professor come from Germany to tell us this. But mark the phrase, *Eternal Reason immanent in the world*. That is to say, immanent in us. For how could Eternal Reason, or any flicker of any sort or kind of reason, be immanent in any Thing, such as a pound of butter or a cup of tea. Reason is in us, not in Things like pounds of butter. In this world of

individuality and change, the Eternal Reason is immanent in us, who are individuals ; in us, who watch the change and contrast of Things. It is in us, and therefore is in our world of Things. And here, to my delight, I find Heraclitus and Saint John both of them supporting me, one on each side : the one a witness to the Word immanent in this world of Things, the other a witness to the Word by whom all Things were made.

At this moment, the clock, ticking on the mantelpiece, reads me a little commentary on these two theologians. What is the reason, the Eternal Reason (all reason, of course, is eternal) of the clock ticking ? Not springs and cogs and pendulum, nor waves of air stirred and flung-out round the clock ; no reason is in these till I translate them. There remain only the clockmaker and myself. He and I are proper abodes of reason : and the insides of a clock are not. That is what he and I are for. You will no more find reason inside a clock than you will find music inside a piano. You put your own immanent music into the piano, and take it out again : you put your own immanent reason into the clock, and take it out again. Nobody above the level of a savage would think that the piano was alive, and was making music of itself : and it is hardly less savage to think that the clock is ticking, and measuring minutes and hours, by itself. The colour of its case, the figures on its face, the sound of the pendulum, the measure-

ment of the time, the relation of the clock to the mantel-piece, all are in me. They are a sort of cypher, which must be read by me. Till I have done that, they must remain outside this world of individuality and change. Reason combines them into an object, makes them into a clock. And here I am back at the marriage-service. The Word, somehow, does make all Things out of nothing. For we may fairly say that they are nothing, so long as they stay outside our world of Things.



### III

## THE WONDER OF NATURE

SITTING here, with my dog near me, the room so evidently warm, the table so evidently solid, the day and the garden so evidently wet, I find myself wondering that the universe and I are on these intimate terms. We seem to have a secret understanding : and I have no doubt that we were made for each other. What would become, without me, of the redness of these roses, and the contrasts of this weather ? In me, on a small scale, the universe realises itself, achieves its purpose, enters into its inheritance, and enjoys its advantages. Its colours, sounds, smells, and so forth, are what I make them. It cannot come to its proper senses, till it comes to mine.

At this point, I am pulled up short by the old distinction between the primary qualities of Things, and their secondary qualities. The primary qualities, weight, solidity, extension in space, possess more authority, more independence, than the secondary

qualities, such as colour, temperature, and taste. Looking round the room, I know, in a moment, that the patterns on the walls and the furniture, the glow and warmth of the fire, and the taste of my smoking, are all of them the work of my senses in action : but the primary qualities of the room, its shape and proportions, and the solid hardness of its tables and chairs, and the atomic changes which are turning coals and tobacco into fire and smoke, refuse to be dismissed in this fashion. *Of course*, I say to myself, *there must be something really there*. You are sure to have that said to you, once you start arguing about Things. *Oh, all right*, says your friend, *I daresay you're all right about a rose not having any real colour of its own, or any real smell of its own : all I say is, that there must be something really there*. *What on earth is the good of talking to me about colours and smells, when you know quite well all the time that the thing is really there?* And he will perhaps enforce his argument, like Dr. Johnson, by kicking a stone ; or, if you are a boy, you.

Of course, the Thing is really there. But observe how your friend, by these five words, confesses that very philosophy for which he is kicking you. *Thing* is a metaphysical word : it involves all sorts of philosophical doctrines about Subject and Object. *Is* and *really* are likewise metaphysical words, so heavy that Christian Science, trying to lift them, sustained serious internal injuries. As for *there*, it involves

Aristotle's categories, and all the philosophical doctrines involved in *Thing*, and one or two more. If your friend had only taken the trouble to think out the full meaning of his five words, he would not yet have arrived at kicking you. Let him say what he will, and kick what he can, the fact remains, that the primary qualities of Things, no less than the secondary qualities, must be stated, by us, in terms of thought, before we can begin to think of them. Whatever they may be "of themselves," we know them only as they reach us. Even if we drop, so far as we can, all metaphysics, and content ourselves with practical common-sense, we still find the universe adjusted to us, and ourselves to it. And, to this adjustment, we may fairly give the name of Nature.

We are apt to draw a hard and fast line between the two words, Matter and Nature. We talk as if Matter were what a Thing is made of, and as if Nature were what a Thing does. But, once you begin to think about Things, you are bound to see that they do what they are made of, and are made of what they do. A brick wall, for example, would not be a brick wall, unless it hurt you when you ran your head against it. At the end of all our thinking, we find that the kingdom of Nature is the kingdom of Matter.

Still, it is worth our while to regard, apart from all else, this one word, Nature. It is equally legible

on the sun and in the dust : and every fact in the universe is signed, like a Royal proclamation, *Natura R. et I.* We observe Nature, we obey Nature, we are Nature. When a word means all that, and more, what meaning is left for other words ? Shall we stop here, and wash our hands of the whole affair, acknowledging that All is Nature, and that Nature is All ? Wait a bit : look into the markings on this word, and the signs of long use. Words, even the oldest of them, are of human invention ; and the marks on old words are of more interest than the marks on old china.

The Latin word *Natura* and the Greek word *φύσις* (*phŭsis*) are curiously unlike : the early Greeks and the early Latins, doubtless, parted company, before they had agreed on a sound that should express Nature. They had agreed that Father and Mother should be called by such sounds as Pa and Ma ; and they had named other necessities of domestic life, such as dogs, cattle, swine, and wine : but they left for subsequent consideration the name of Nature. That is why the two words are so unlike. But the underlying thought is the same, alike in Latin and in Greek : it is the thought of birth. We have the root of *Natura* in the verb *nasci*, to be born : we use it, we who say that Latin is a dead language, in such words as nascent, innate, nativity. We have the root of *Phusis* in the verb *phu-ein*, to be born : we use it, this dead root, in such words



as physical and physiology. I do not know how *na* or *nas* became associated with the onset of birth and the look of the woods in spring-time: but I hazard a guess at this blowing sound *phu*. It is the sound of primal man blowing tinder into a glow. *Phu, phu, phu*, till flames run riot in the little heap of brushwood, and shadows dance, and the bare cave begins to look warm and comfortable. The fire is born: that is just the word for it. The same thing happened when the baby was born. First came he and she, and then—*phu, phu, phu*—came the baby. So here: first came the tinder and the brushwood, and then—*phu, phu, phu*—came the fire. Henceforth *phu* was a birth-sound, a name for all births, whether of babies, leaves, or fires: and, as time went on, this word *phusis* was applied, not only to life at the birth, but to all forces and processes which had any resemblance, real or fanciful, to life. For these early races of mankind saw no difference, where none is to be seen, between the birth of a baby and the birth of a fire: either event is just as natural as the other. And, at last, so many occasions arose for the use of the name of Nature that it comprehended not birth alone, nor life alone, but the whole presence and power of the universe.

In languages committed, for better for worse, to nouns of different genders, the word Nature is feminine. The origin of the genders of nouns is past finding out: but the fact remains, that Nature

is a birth-word, and is feminine. Therefore, when mankind became imaginative, Nature became a woman, and that woman a mother. Feminine nouns are thoroughly feminine: try your hardest, you cannot say Father Nature. You might as well try to say Mother Time. And here I am wandering from the argument—but I ask you, if Time be an old man, with hour-glass and scythe and forelock, why should Space, in this age of aëroplanes, be left without sex and attributes? Space would lend itself to artistic treatment no less readily than Time: and I wish that Mr. Bernard Partridge would design a conventional figure of Old Father Space, with proper costume and equipment.

Once an abstract noun becomes a woman with the instincts of a mother, it makes haste to array itself in adjectives suited to its sex. Kindness, patience, forgiveness, tender care for children, diligence, foresight; these virtues are in women. Therefore, we impute them to Nature, calling her provident, bountiful, calm, long-suffering. Also, we impute vices to Nature; and are none too scrupulous in our estimate of the exact weight of that imputation. Nature, sometimes, must find it hard to keep calm, with us laying the blame of our offences on her.

I do believe that we are led astray, without knowing it, by this perpetual talk of Nature as Her, this perpetual imagining of a motherly woman. We

set out Nature, as I used to set out the contents of my Noah's ark. It is Sunday morning : the others are gone to church, and I may have my ark, because it is a Sunday game. Inside, the animals rattle, and would rattle more freely were they not so many and so close that they sprout when I draw the lid. They lie packed, limbs entangled, each with legs or tail hurting his neighbours. I shake out the seething crowd of lives, and arrange a procession : the lid, put as a plank, makes a gangway from the level of the nursery-table back into the dim hold of the ark. First, Noah and his wife ; then his three sons and their wives : these, the whole octave of them, ascended the gangway, *such splendid purpose in their eyes*. Then, by right of size, came the elephants : for the Origin of Species was but a few years old, and I did not know that the apes ought to come next to the family. After the elephants came the lions and tigers, cattle, sheep, and other quadrupeds, with uncertain dappled mammals which I called lynxes. Then the birds. I had no reptiles : and of course there are no fishes in a Noah's ark. I forget now where the apes did come. Always, the two butterflies, and a pair of neatly-made house-flies or ark-flies, were last in the procession. Orderly, two and two, side by side, the flat silent Byzantine figures went home across the table-cloth. I took them for granted. They taught me nothing, they gave me no insight into anything, they more distracted than attracted

what mind I had at that age. I shall invent, for the education of my grandchildren, a toy for the teaching of the Origin of Species, as my ark was for the teaching of the Book of Genesis. The procession will begin at the right end. It will emerge out of a large shapeless receptacle, made of a flabby black material, and labelled *Primordial Bio-Chemical Phenomena*: and it will walk backward, each performer in the pageant thus showing proper deference to the facts of reversion, and recognising the full significance of its vestigial organs. First, will come the germs, microbes, algæ, yeasts, spores, protozoa, and the like uni-cellular creatures. The difficulty will be, to make them visible to the naked eye: and there must be some device to say that they are harmless. Then, the ascidians, jelly-fishes and sea-anemones: then, the amphioxus, all by himself, with this legend, on a little paper banner, *Vertebratus sum, vertebrati nihil a me alienum puto*: then, fishes of a more definite style, and the amphibians. The procession, at this point, will be interrupted: then will come the reptiles, and the birds, and, I should think, somewhere about here, the ornithorhynchus, but I am not sure. Then, a very pretty sight, the lemuridæ, supported right and left by the entire strength of the company of the mammalia, should march, as proud as proud can be: and, if it were my very own toy, to do just what I like with, I would cut out little crowns for them, out of the silver paper round butterscotch,



and would put over them a little spangled canopy of white silk. For they are the ancestors of the apes ; who, of course, would come next, but they should have no crowns nor canopy, because I hate them, because they are so like me. And then, that hairy creature, likest of all, but with pointed ears, made to move, and a tail, and handy feet, and a little tree to climb. And then, Man. But it makes no difference to the wonder of Nature whether I set Man first or last in the procession. At best, I am but arranging a little model of Nature, playing with a toy Nature. Though I should live as long as Tithonus, and think hard all the time, I shall die still wondering, wondering.

But I cannot put this wonder into words. For, so soon as I try, certain great words, God, Matter, Self, bear down on me, and stop me, in the very act of thinking that I am thinking. These great words are inseparable from the word Nature, and will not let it alone : word calls up word on the telephone of the brain ; to think of one of them is to remember all of them. In the presence of these three words, how can we find employment for a fourth ? What meaning remains for Nature, if these other words have meanings ? What room is left for wondering at Nature, what ground for believing in Nature, if we believe in, and wonder at, these three ? I see no way to set in order the house of thought, but to get rid of all words that are not really wanted : and, if one

of the four must go, it must be Nature. If three can do the whole work of the house, prepare food for thought, open the door to thought, and supply every need of thought, why have four servants, when three are enough for the work? The household is too large: nobody ought to employ four servants to do the work of three.

Will you therefore give notice to this word Nature? You do not require its services: dismiss it, and see what happens. That is more easily said than done: and I doubt whether this old word will take a month's notice from you. The most that you can do, is to keep Nature in its proper place in the house of thought. To gain that end, you must set your face against all talk about the methods, designs, efforts, forces, and beauty of Nature. Attribute to this abstract word neither virtues nor vices, neither successes nor failures, neither will, purpose, development, laws, changes, nor any other power, act, or intent such as you find or imagine in God, Matter, and Self. Nature is the adjustment between these three; it has no reality of its own: you might as well say that the angles of a building are real, apart from the building.

But, such are the ways of the house of thought, no sooner have you pensioned the word Nature than the word Life applies for the vacant situation: and you must consider whether you can run the house without the services of this word Life.

So far as I am able to think of Life, which is but half-an-inch of guessing, not thinking, I venture to guess that the kingdom of Life is part of the other three kingdoms. If I may use a phrase of Heraclitus, I would suggest to you the notion that, downward, Life is Matter ; upward, it is Self. So far as I can see, which is but half-a-yard of blinking, not seeing, I seem to find, in the lowest action of Life, a purely material fact ; and, in the highest action of Self, a purely spiritual fact. And, if I were an out-and-out monist, like Heraclitus, I should be able to get from the one fact to the other, sliding up and down between Heaven and Earth, not stopping anywhere, and perfectly sure that Mind and Matter are not two but one.

Meanwhile, from the dualist point of view, that Mind and Matter are not one but two, I pray you to observe what a very small part of the universe is Life. Though there should be life on Mars or elsewhere, yet earth and Mars are but two of millions of heavenly bodies : we see the stars, but see not one in a thousand of them. If it were possible to imagine a chart of the universe, and that chart the size of Trafalgar Square, I doubt whether the earth would be marked on it. Here, on this earth, is life ; and, so far as we know, it is nowhere else. There may be life elsewhere in the universe : but we have no right to say that there is. If there be none, there may be some, a million years hence :

but we have no right to think that there will be. Here, on this earth, ages hence, there will be less ; and, at last, there will be none. As earth cooled, a film of life was formed on its surface : and this film will disappear, when earth is cold, like breath off a mirror. Once there was none, and now there is some, and in the end there will be none. It came, they say, of itself, when the falling temperature permitted the proper grouping of the right sort of atoms : it will go, when the fallen temperature forbids these atoms to assemble themselves together : nor will it ever come back, *ad sæcula sæculorum*. Practically, the universe is inanimate : only, as the Curies detected a trace of radium in pitchblende, and as Lord Rayleigh detected a trace of argon in air, so, if you keep your spectroscope to that one point of the universe where the earth *spins like a fretful midge*, you will discover, at this one point, a trace of life : which, at last, will cease to be visible.

Across this prospect, the present reality and wonder of each separate life rush like a blaze of sunshine over a cemetery. Admit without reserve that earth is fated to relapse into a glacial old age, as dead as the moon, with not so much as one speck left or its film. What is the necessary consequence of admitting this fact ? It is, that you must go down on your knees before the reality and the wonder of each life here to-day, adoring this miracle of miracles, that a seed grows to be a flower, and a kitten grows



to be a cat, and a baby may live to be a grandpapa. I shall never be able not to wonder that my heart beats and my brain acts and my hand holds a pen : that I can distinguish colours, and taste and smell my food, and hear the noise of the streets, and walk in them. Life, out of all the universe, chose this one planet for its miracles ; and, among all the recipients of its miracles, chose me for one : downward, Matter, and upward, Self.

#### IV

### THE WONDER OF SELF

As the golden apples of the Hesperides, and the golden fleece, and the gold of the Nibelungs, were guarded by dragons, so the wonder of Self, which is of more value than any of them, is guarded. The twin dragons, which serve as guardians of the wonder of Self, are that pair of old facts called Time and Space. To wonder intelligently at Self, we must first reckon with these two facts. Happily, Time and Space are a most inseparable old couple : they agree about everything. If we get past the one, we get past the other, and are free to draw near to the wonder of Self.

Space is one of our ways of measuring the universe, one of our ways of taking Things as they come : and Time is the other way. Here, there, somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, and nowhere, are Space. Now, then, are Time : and if it were not for the poverty of grammar, we might add somewhen, anywhen, everywhen, and nowhen. We measure

Things, measure them by Space and Time. They do not measure themselves : it is we who measure them. Observe, I pray you, that to measure is to compare, contrast, and judge. It takes Self to do that. Each of us imposes, on his or her share of the universe, this condition, that it must be presented to him, or to her, in Space and Time : and the universe accepts and fulfils this condition, or it could not be presented to us at all. My table, for example, has a lot of Things on it : pens, papers, books, inkpot, matchbox, and so forth. They are "in space" : the pens here, the inkpot there, the books and the papers elsewhere : the matchbox, I find, is nowhere on the table ; it must be somewhere on the mantel-piece. It is I, who thus compare, contrast, and judge the whereabouts of each, and the relation of each to all : it is I, who am the measure of all these Things.

The universe, of course, is "really there" ; nor do things care twopence whether we measure them or not. Still, they cannot do it for themselves. My dressing room carpet, for example, is "really there," upstairs ; but, strictly speaking, it does not measure ten feet by eight : I alone measure the carpet. It would not measure anything by anything if I were not "really here." Or take an example on a grander scale. It is so many millions of miles from the earth to the sun. So it is ; and the universe does not wait to be informed of that fact : all the same, the distance

between the earth and the sun is measured not by them but by Self. If you think that I am inventing distinctions without differences, consider how we talk of "infinite space" and of "empty space"; how we think of the universe as if it were only a vast sphere with all manner of Things swimming round and round inside it.

*Infinite Space* is a phrase to be avoided. Be careful, all your life, over this dangerous and most unruly word, Infinite. You will find it impatient of control, even if you spell it with a small letter. It gets altogether beyond your management if you give it a capital letter. And it fairly bolts with you, if you add the definite article to it, turning it from an adjective into a substantive. Beware of thinking that you can think of The Infinite: never apply this adjective to Space. Finite and infinite are not words that should be used of measures, intervals, or contrasts between this and that point of the universe.

Avoid also the phrase *Empty Space*. It should be easily avoided; for it offends both logic and science. Logic is quite sure that measurements, intervals, and contrasts have nothing to do with emptiness or fulness: a mile cannot be empty, any more than it can be ugly, or cold, or cross. And science is quite sure that the universe is continuous in space; that no space is empty. Solids and fluids and vapours and gases occupy space; no building-ground in the universe is to let; the blue of the sky is packed as



full of matter as a rock : the air, weighed against more subtle gases, is gross and heavy as clay. When we try to think of these more subtle forms of matter, we drop that word, and call them forms of energy. For there are gases to which the air is as paving-stones to feathers : and there is the interstellar ether, to which the subtlest gases are as paving-stones to feathers. Long before we get to the ether, we are at the end of our powers of imagination : it takes a Fellow of the Royal Society, to think of the interstellar ether. But this much we are capable of understanding, that matter cannot leave off being material, not even if we call it by another name. From my table, millions of miles to the furthest of the stars, and beyond them, something is there ; the universe is full everywhere, empty nowhere, all *plenum*, no *vacuum* ; between the ultimate stars and me, there is something all the way, or how could I see them ? And this something is one and the same energy, manifest in all things : in light and sound and heat, in electricity, in gases, fluids, and solids. It occupies space, it “ possesses extension ” ; therefore, it is matter. Where space is (and where is it not ?) there matter is : no space is empty of the Heraclitean Fire.

Further, I advise you to say nothing about *Absolute Space*, or *Space in Itself*. Space, whatever it may be, certainly is a way of measuring things : and no measure is absolute, nor ever will be, so long as there

is anything to be measured. Neither can space be in itself : for it is not a self to be in. Measures, as Saint Paul said of idols, are "nothing in the world" : an idol is not a self, though its worshippers may attribute self to it ; and space is not a self, though the worshippers of phrases often allude to "space in itself."

Take a simple example of measure : you buy a pennyworth of cherries. The penny is as real as real can be ; and so are the cherries : but the pennyworth, the measure, is just a word for the number of cherries that you get for a penny. It is not what Christian Science calls an "entity." Oh, worst of all helpless words, *Entity* : feeblest of the whole brood of derivatives from *Esse, to be*. Call space by any names that you like, Infinite, Empty, Absolute, Self : but, as you hope to keep sane, draw the line at calling it an Entity.

As the cherries are "really there," whether you buy them or not, so the universe is "really there," whether you measure it or not. I only say that your share of it comes to you on your own terms ; that you impose on that aspect of Things which alone is given to you conditions of your own making.

If you find it hard to think thus of Space, try whether you can more easily think of that other measure of the universe, which we call Time. As we assign space to objects, so we assign time to events. As it takes Self to tell here from there, so it takes

Self to tell now from then. As a pennyworth is the number of cherries that you get for a penny, so a minute is the number of experiences that you get in a minute. There is nothing Absolute about minutes and hours, days and years : they are a measure, they are not "entities." In brief, what we believe regarding space, that we believe regarding time. Events do not care twopence, whether we measure them or not : still, as a matter of fact, we do measure them, nor can they happen to us unless we measure them : for they cannot measure themselves. It is so many centuries from the death of Cæsar to the death of Queen Victoria. So it is ; and the universe does not wait to be informed of that fact : all the same, the interval between these two events is measured not by them but by Self. Beware of the dangerous phrase *Infinite Time* : the word Infinite cannot be used of measures, intervals and contrasts between this and that moment of the universe. Avoid talking of *Absolute Time*, or of *Time in Itself* : measures are not absolute, measures are not Selves.

I seek in vain a more common-sense explanation of Space and Time. They must be, in some way past our finding out, independent of us ; but we must go by what we know of them : and our knowledge stops at this point, that they are our two ways of taking Things as they come. My share of the universe is delivered at my address, tied up, like a parcel, in Space and Time. That is all that we

know of them. They are the two conditions of that adjustment which is between us and the universe; the two rules under which all Things arrive at us. And the point is, that it takes Self to receive that which is addressed to Self.

Here is a lot of fuss about Space and Time ; and all of it, to the best of my belief, true. I am sure that he who would clear his mind of wrong views of Self must first try to make it up as to the meaning of these two words. I hate to hear old words ill-treated. If it were possible, to confer honours and decorations on words, there are many that deserve a peerage, and not a few that might well be canonised, even in their lifetime, for their blessed work among mankind.

Consider, now, the wonder of Self. Round the fact that I am I, wonder, like a moth round a lamp, flies, and will fly, till the end comes of mankind. That is an old comparison of Self, to a lamp, candle, or torch : I know not how many monuments display inverted torches and flameless oil-lamps. But, to find a lamp just like ourselves, we had to wait for the discovery of the electric light. There is no close likeness to us in torches and candles : but this electric lamp, slung at the end of a string over my table, is curiously like. Its material fabric is carbon, which is the essential element of the human body. Its delicate filament is the very image of the thread of life. Its light is produced not in air, but



in a rarer medium than air : it shines through the air, it makes its influence felt at every point of the room, yet must be protected from the air of the room, must be in the room yet kept from the room ; it is extinguished where gross oil and tallow find their occasion, and it finds its occasion where they are extinguished. It burns with fire and is not consumed. It resists the electric current, and by that resistance it fulfils the purpose for which it was made. If it offered no resistance, it would give no light : if it offered too much resistance, it would give less light than it ought, and waste the current. Here is an excellent fable of God and Man : and the same applies to all electric flat-irons, kettles and food-warmers. Lamps and kettles and all, they must be made of some alien stuff, which opposes its will to the will of the unseen dynamo : and, by opposing, obeys. That is how they are made, and that is why they were made. They stand out against the current, and thereby enable it to use them and manifest itself in them : and, if they did not resist it, they could not bear witness to it. If they were not alien to it, if it and they were of one "substance," then it would be "immanent" in them, and something more than immanent : for the room would be dark, and my lady's fine laces would go unironed, and my lord's shaving-water would be cold, and so would the breakfast-dish. O all ye electric lamps and kettles, what a verse you might add to the *Benedicite*.

Here, to my thinking, we get a glimpse of the wonder of Self, in this evidence that we are both creatures and creators. We are somehow set apart from that which we call, having no better word, the Creator : we may talk about immanence till we are tired, and our hearers likewise, but we cannot get away from the fact that immanence implies difference. If A be immanent in B, it is because B is not A. If A stands for the Creator, and B for us, then we are the creatures, not the Creator. Yet, in the very act of calling ourselves *frail creatures of dust, and feeble as frail*, we are drawn up, like the sheet in St. Peter's dream, into Heaven, seeing that our shares of the universe are somehow made by us ; and forthwith we are inclined to call ourselves Creators. Forgive me, if I go back to the amazing instance of my red rose. It is not red unless I look at it, nor fragrant, unless I smell it. Thus far, I am its Creator. Of course, the rose itself is really there : its material substance (the audience are kindly requested to stand, while these two words are taking their seats on the platform) occupies space : its life and death, its chemical and vital processes (the audience are kindly requested to stand again) occupy time. This substance, these processes, are none of my making : they are the work of the "Thing-as-it-is-in-itself." All the same, a rose, a visible, tangible, intelligible rose, comes to me under conditions of my making, or it would never come. What the rose may be "in itself," as I

cannot know, so I do not care. Our business is with what we rightly call the "real world": this world of ours, this spaced and timed world, addressed to us, adapted to our conditions, and measured by our measures.

Thus far, I seem able to see the wonder of Self: but I am puzzling over a problem which may be worth stating. This problem sounds very stupid; but that is no reason why it should not receive a sensible answer. Imagine a room constructed as a sphere, and your body suspended in the middle of it. The question is, what occupies the central point of this ridiculous room. Yourself, did you say? Pardon me, that is not the case. The exact centre of the room is a point in your body, probably in your liver or in your stomach: or it might be (I could not say for certain, without dissection) in your spleen. Anyhow, it would not be yourself. Well, then, where are you?

This incorrigible problem haunts all the thoroughfares of thought, and turns up like a beggar at every street-corner, and outside every tavern, in the city of the mind. There never was a sillier question that needed a wiser answer: and, I think, the best hope of getting a wise answer is, to state the question in its naked silliness. You are suspended, in air, in the middle of a hollow sphere, as it were inside the ball of St. Paul's. At the exact centre of that sphere, is a drop of your blood, a cell of your liver, a particle

of your last meal, or something of that sort. Where, in the room, is that which we call Self? There are two ways of answering : and, between them, they cover the whole realm of logic and science. If it were possible here, just here, to be perfectly wise, we should possess the ultimate secret of all secrets.

One way is the way of philosophy. It sets out from the doctrine that space is a form or measure, applicable to things, not to thought. The Ego, the Self, is not measurable by any measure of space, nor of time either ; and to ask, Where is Self? is like asking how far it is from twelve o'clock to London Bridge. Objects are spaced, events are timed ; Self is neither in space nor in time, it is just Self. The shell of the room, and the fabric of your body and its organs, are objects, not subject : they are yours, not you. Circumference is a word for the surrounding cage of the room, and central is a word for one point in your body : but these words are terms of measurement, terms of space. The ego, the self, that which calls itself I, is not measurable in space ; it is neither at one point nor at all points of the room, it is neither inside nor outside the room. Here and there, inside and outside, are words that must not be applied to Self.

This philosophical view of Self is in accord with many facts of experience. You and I have gone together over them, and cannot refuse to acknowledge



them. We found that the kingdom of Self is just as real as the kingdom of Things, and that we must not use the word Reality of object apart from subject. We found that Self translates Things ; that colours, smells, and sounds, are transfigured by Self, and are made, as it were, out of nothing ; that Self, somehow, abides through the changes of Things, and presides over those changes ; that the power to tell this from that, here from there, now from then, proves Self to be not only creature but creator. I am not able, try as I will, to think of Thought as measurable in time and space. Take the familiar fact that two and two are four : what have time and space to do with it ? Such facts are eternal : they can no more be timed or spaced than they can be weighed, or seen, or spread on toast. As these facts are eternal, so must Self be eternal : for it is in Self, and in Self alone, that facts are facts. That which is eternal and immeasurable must be housed in that which is eternal and immeasurable. You can no more house eternity in a man's body than you can put a problem of Euclid in your pocket.

Now that you have taken yourself as Thought, and have heard what philosophy has to say, hear what the other side has to say. Take yourself as Thing.

You, says the other side, were evolved from lower forms of life. That which you call self, or consciousness, is the working of your brain : for, as

bells are capable of sound, so brains are capable of thought. In a baby, an idiot, a drunkard, a case of disease or injury of the brain, we can see, with our own eyes, self in the making, or in the unmaking. Your consciousness came gradually, as your brain grew : you were not conscious when you lay in your mother's womb, nor will be when you lie in your coffin. That which you call I is just a form of life ; and all forms of life are forms of matter. Those acts of your brain which are thought and will and self might all be explained, examined, tested with chemical re-agents and electrical instruments ; every particle of you surrenders to analysis and experiment : nothing is not accounted for, nothing left out, nothing left over. All that is you is inside your skin ; you began with your birth and you end with your death. Leave off mooning about the ego, and look at other animals. You are *Homo Sapiens* ; next comes *Homo Insipiens* ; then the monkeys : down, without a break, through mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, invertebrates : watch, all down the scale of life, the gradual blotting-out of Self : watch consciousness from man to ape, dog, sheep, snake, and frog, point by point flickering out, and vanishing, somewhere ; and it does not concern us where. Then, well below this vanishing-point, turn and make your way back, and see consciousness flickering in again, first a few nerve-cells, and then a proper little speck of brain-tissue, and then a little more, and more, and

at last a decent lobed and convoluted brain, fit for such Nature's gentlemen as mice and guinea-pigs, with habits, passions, and instincts all complete and in working order : up, without a break, from mice to men : all the way, you find this fact, that mice and men differ in degree, not in kind. The living body is the living Self ; and there is but one kind of life, in a million forms of life : " as the one dieth, so dieth the other ; yea, they have all one breath ; so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast."

Between these two beliefs, must I decide, or can I hold a middle course ? Am I free to stroll between them, arm-in-arm with each, and in agreement with both of them ? Am I not rather staggering along in their grip, like a very small thief between two huge policemen ? Surely, their beats are in opposite directions : they cannot both of them be taking me to the station.

Well, the best *via media* for me is the wide familiar road of my ignorance : and a good lantern for me is the fact that I am I. But the puzzle about that round room comes back to me. Imagine, suspended in the middle of the room, not a man but a mouse. What shall we say now ? Shall we say that the mouse imposes on its share of the universe measures of its own making ; that the mouse itself is not measurable in space, and is neither inside nor outside the room ? It sounds excessive, to say that of a mouse. Yet, if we do not say it, how shall we

hope to find in ourselves what we cannot find in Brother Mouse?

Like the sailors in the Psalm, I reel to and fro, and am at my wit's end, between these beliefs : and my only hope, it seems to me, is just to go on wondering at Self. I am sure that I am not my brain ; no brain can say *I am I* : if it could, it would not be a brain. I am sure that I am not a succession of states of consciousness ; no succession can say *I am a succession* : if it could, it would not be a succession. I am sure that I remain the same, in a world, addressed to me, which is never the same for two moments together. The formula for me is *I am that I am* : and against this fact of Self, let all other facts beat, and it will not fall. Though I see, or think that I see, the very making of Self, the actual flickering-up of it, from a speck of nerve-cells to my own eligible brain fitted with all modern appliances, yet, the nearer I get to my brain, the surer I feel that I, somehow, am not it, and it, somehow, is not I.

If, going down the scale of lives, the wonder of each life were less than the wonder of the life just above it ; if a sheep were less wonderful than a man, and an oyster than a sheep ; then I should despair. If, in the lowest forms of life, I found something that I could understand ; if they were more commonplace, more legible, more explicable, than the highest forms of life : then let us build altars to Chance, and cease to bother our heads about Things. Happily, I find



nothing of that sort. Oysters, in their way, are quite as wonderful as poets and saints and men of science ; and I have no difficulty in wondering no less at them than at man.

Indeed, it would be possible to write up the lower forms of life as even more wonderful than the higher. Man is a faulty structure : his diseases, drink, sins, vestigial organs, stupid habits, fading instincts, proclaim his inferiority. Behold the apes : they have risen above meat-eating to the perfect fruitarian diet, they are total abstainers, their instincts are alert, their teeth are sound, and they are immune against many of our diseases. Up, up, to the sheep : our vices, our offences, are gone : the sheep is practically sinless. High above the sheep, behold the oyster : he has conquered pain, he has ascended out of the reach of all passion, all falsehood, all uncharitableness, all discord. Highest of all, strain your vision to that zenith where, at the vanishing-point of Life, is the vanishing-point of Death, and the last enemy is overcome.

Ah, let me talk sense. You and I know well that I have not yet touched, nor been within a mile of touching, the true wonder of Self. All this talk about time and space, and men and mice in round rooms, has nothing to do with it. The true wonder of you and me is not an affair of logic nor of science : it is an affair of will and of conduct. Though it is

wonderful, past all telling, that a man is able to distinguish red from blue, and his fingers from his toes, and to-day from to-morrow, yet the wonder-fullest fact about him is, that he can distinguish *I will* from *I will not*, and right from wrong ; that he possesses not only consciousness but a conscience ; that he not only is here, but is here for purposes which are outside all that we usually mean by the word Nature.

## V

### THE WONDER OF PAIN

FOOLS, says Pope, rush in where angels fear to tread : but I am sure that angels rush in where fools fear to tread. There are many fools who are afraid of treading anywhere. But angels rush in, without fear, everywhere : and, the more fearsome a place looks, the more haste they make to tread it. They leave the fool outside, shuffling with embarrassment, self-conscious, half-hearted, wondering if and whether, and letting *I dare not wait upon I would*. For instance, when the people next-door lost their only child, there was a fool who left his card, because he was afraid to go in : but there was an angel who rushed in, and broke down, and cried, so that the other two found their tears ; and it was time that they did, or one of them would have gone out of her mind. And when that young fellow, you know whom I mean, was getting into evil ways, and there was a lot of talk, but none of us quite liked to interfere, it was old Angelus who said *Call yourselves his friends ? I call you a pack of fools*, and went straight

off to him, and said that which made him turn over not one new leaf but half a dozen, and tear the old leaves out of the book of his life and burn them. That is the way of all angels ; they are absolutely fearless, and, where they can be of any service, there they tread. Their one fear is, that they may be too late : they dare not risk the shame of delay, the disgrace of not behaving like angels. So, if I venture into the presence of the wonder of Pain, I may be less of a fool than usual, and more of an angel. For the angels are there before me, and the whole place is full of the sound of their feet : and they keep saying that there is, because there must be, a meaning in all pain. They know that pain will never let go of life ; that earth rings, like hammered iron, and always did, and always will, with pain, pain, pain : and they have the face, these bold angels, to say that there must be, therefore there is, a meaning in every bit of it, past, present, and to come. That is why Christian Science does not believe in angels, because she does not believe in pain, and they do : and the contrast between her and them, on a Good Friday, is one of the sights of London.

Imagine, if you can, this world suddenly emptied of all pain. Imagine, that nothing hurts ; that the entire course of each life, from birth to death, is painless ; that all possibility of any sense of pain is wiped clean away. On Sunday night, the world was in pain, as it always is. On Monday



morning, it could feel none : there was none to be felt. You are now in a world so disposed that the very name of pain means nothing. What sort of a world would it be ?

Where no pain is, there will be no fear of pain. It sounds like a change for the better, to be rid of that fear. No more cowards, no more bullies ; no more lying and shirking from fear of pain ; no more terror of accidents, assaults, surgical operations, or bodily punishment. If you ever had the ear-ache, really bad, remember now the fear of that pain coming on, coming nearer, getting worse. As in a house at night, under sudden alarm, lights appear in the windows, and bells are heard, and voices in the rooms, and footsteps along the passages, and at last a shouting, and a banging of doors, and the whole house, from garrets to basement, rocks with fright, so it was with you : the pain stirred, woke, became worse, ran from room to room of the house of life, till the heart was taken out of you, and you surrendered, and lay there sobbing and sweating and putting up wild little prayers which made no difference. You were crying not with pain alone but with fear of pain : it had begun to throb, and you knew what was coming, and were sick with fear. Surely, to be rid of that fear would be to wake from a nightmare, back into this gracious world, this world full of reason, full of consolation.

But is that the way of the world, to let us have

anything for nothing? Is it not the law, that we buy our pleasures by weight, and pay for what we take? I am sure that if we got rid of one cause of fear, we should put another in its place. For we are afraid from birth, and fear is woven into our very fabric as a born instinct : we could not rest, nor be satisfied, without use and exercise of this primal sense. "Something or other," says Newman, "men must fear, men must loathe, men must suspect." If it were not pain that we feared, it would be death ; if it were not death, it would be the dread of something after death. Fear has a thousand opportunities, and would hardly miss one, out of so many.

But I am trying to imagine the world loosed, not only from the fear of pain, but from the fact of pain : a painless world, and each of us housed in a painless body. What would it all be like? Imagine the vision come true, *Neither shall there be any more pain*: judge, if you can, how we should be affected by the change.

It would be, of course, a time of more disease, and of more death : for we should have less warning against them. As lepers of old carried clappers, to announce their coming, so diseases carry pain, that we may avoid them. The pity is, that not all diseases thus confess themselves : for some are silent, and make no sign, till it is too late to turn them out of the house of life. We let them in, we fail to see them for what they are, and they sit at our hearth

and warm their shrunk limbs at the fire ; and, before they declare the taint of their présence, the harm is done. Other diseases are more honest, and sound their clappers of pain, and we shut the door against them in good time. How would it be with us, if they should cease to give us that note of warning ? In a world void of pain, they would arrive unheeded, advance unchallenged, till the land was full of Homes for Incurables. Truly, we should die like flies. It would not hurt : still, that is not what we are for. Old age would be a rare event ; the average length of our lives would fall to some five-and-twenty or thirty years.

Neither should we maintain, even for that shortened time, our present standard of bodily health. It is fairly certain that we should lose our fitness, and slowly become less clean, less wholesome : for we should neglect the state of our teeth and of our insides, bear with complacence ugly scars, deformities, and open sores, and leave off keeping our bodies as Heaven likes to see them kept. Dull acceptance of illnesses, languid abandonment of our pride in the good looks of the body, stupid acquiescence in unwholesomeness—these faults, worse than now, would be in all but the best of us, once the protection of pain was gone. The best of us would still cling, so well as they could, to the old tradition, that the body is for its own sake worthy of care and honour ; and a few of us would become the more scrupulous to

keep well, if it could not hurt them to be ill : but the multitude of the very poor would let their bodily affairs drift into bankruptcy of health, to be wound up, at last, by Death. I have no doubt at all that here in London the poor would lie about the streets, as in the days of the Tudors, exposing their diseases to the public view ; and the hospitals would not suffice to admit them. Let us be clear in our minds, that the warnings of pain are a safeguard of our national health and strength.

Besides, if pain were to fly out of the world, it would take with it half the fun out of pleasure. Consider how great a part of your pleasures is in the contrast between them and your pains, the relief of them after your pains : how they make light in the darkness, and music in place of noise. But you ought to be a doctor, or a nurse, to understand the keen pleasure of the mere stopping of pain. You would know what it may be, if you had ever seen a patient snatching at a scrap of lint with chloroform on it, and inhaling the chloroform as if it were the sweetest of all scents ; or heard a patient saying that he was in Heaven, just because he was not in pain. Some sense of contrast, or of relief, is in all pleasures which deserve their name. Food, sleep, exercise, new clothes, dances, theatres, holidays, each and all are inspired by their opposites, and would be pleasureless if they did not bring a change of your fortunes. Observe, I pray you, the dull faces of the people who



drive daily in open carriages : they are always doing it, and their depressed air is widely different from the joy of the coachman's family, who use the carriage in August and September. Observe, likewise, the boredom of going to bed when you are not tired, and the worse than boredom of eating when you are not hungry. Of course, books, and pictures, and music are of another order than food, and sleep, and exercise : all the same, the pleasure of them is heightened by the change, the treat : nor is music ever so beautiful as after long abstinence from music. I cannot think of any pleasant hour which does not owe a part of its happiness to the sense of escape from the flat hours of life : there would be no relief if the flat surface were not there, on which the relief of Pleasure, throned and garlanded, may be raised.

Next, I touch a graver theme, how pain begets fortitude. We all have deserved, and I hope have received, the sweet praise of bearing this or that pain well. Never forget to praise a child for bearing pain well : never try to persuade a child that pain is not painful. Acknowledge with him the reality, the terror, the dominion of pain : then rejoice with him, celebrate his victory of the spirit over the flesh, attend his triumph, along the *Via Sacra* of his youth, up to its Capitol, there to render thanks to the Father of all the Gods. Though you should neglect one or more of the many shrines in your heart, never be neglectful of the shrine of fortitude : offer there

frequent worship, exalt fortitude among the highest objects of your prayers. To bear pain well is to be not only man but also God. All through our lives fortitude remains above the possibility of explanation, a divine act, a downright interposition of Providence to help us to be good. It so rules and sways the admiration of mankind, that Christianity was founded and built on the Passion : and the line is unbroken down from that example to the least of us bearing well the least moment of pain, though it be no more than a cut finger. Nowhere does fortitude leave off till the pain has left off and you can say truly that it does not hurt. Even the most vulgar sorts of pain, such as are not mentioned in public, and those which are most evidently deserved, are ennobled by the proper bearing of them. Fortitude illumines pain like sunshine, or like a procession through dull streets : it writes Victory across the very page where Failure was written. And the best of it is that no occasion is too trivial for its exercise, no point of our lives too low to catch its light.

Besides, the presence of pain in the world begets not only the will to endure but the will to encounter pain. What would become, in a painless world, of the honour of being a soldier, a sailor, an explorer, or a policeman ? To follow these high callings, it is not enough that a man should have loyalty, obedience, and strength : he must also take his way where pain is on the look-out for him, must hold himself ready

for the bearing of pain at a moment's notice. He may wait for years, but he keeps, more or less alert, his courage to suffer pain when the time comes ; and come it will, and he knows that, but he does not care. For he has turned out of his heart, by the grace of God, and well nigh out of his thoughts, the fear of pain.

In brief, a world void of all pain would be, in many ways, a world not regenerate but degenerate : poorer, not richer, in health, long life, perfect fitness, natural pleasures, fortitude, and courage ; duller, not more delightful ; not so vivid nor so adventurous as it is now. The best of us, doubtless, would keep, as a kind of aristocratic duty, their present high level of bodily wholesomeness ; but the rest of us would carelessly and slovenly incur many ailments and disabilities against which, as things are, pain warns them.

How stupid to write thus, as if men, women, and children were God's only creatures. What is the use of any notions of pain which leave out the pain of the animals ? Are there not, for each of us, legions of them ?

But, in that game of cards which is between you and Faith, the animals are reckoned as a separate suit. Though they and we are closely alike, yet the mystery of them is not the mystery of us : and the wonder of human pain stands away from the wonder of animal pain. To my thinking, the quantity and the quality

of the life and death, pleasure and pain, of animals, if you look at them apart from man, are enough to beat every card in Faith's hand. To think of the animal creation, apart from the human creation, is, for me, to lose all hope that anything more than Chance made or makes this world. Man, we know, has inflicted all sorts of evils and sins on it, but he has, to do him justice, rendered it intelligible, or partly intelligible : but a world all animals and no man would be absurd. For consider the pain of animals. Get what solace you can from the fact that they are not so sensitive as we are : make the most of that. You still must face the vast extent of their pain. We inflict some : Nature inflicts more : "the end of every wild animal's life is a tragedy." The service of man justifies a very small proportion. Why should the service of Nature be so heavy with pain? What is the good of it all? Though the ages have slowly improved breeds and species, and have made animals more diverse, more intelligent, than the huge thick-skinned monsters which now are fossils, why must a torrent of blood be poured out for that? Imagine that the work of creation had stopped short of man : imagine, at the top of life, not men, but apes. No God, nor the ugliest fetish ever worshipped in Dahomey, would be content with such a world, save to enjoy the sight of the blood and the noise of the howling. Earth without us would indeed be earth to earth.



The wonder of the pain of animals is not explained by the uses that we have of them : for they were tearing each other, and were dying of cold and hunger and disease, long before we came into being. Besides, though we give them pain, we also give them pleasure. But I think that we do not know what we are saying, when we talk as if they were made and set in the world merely for our convenience. That is why the animals in my Noah's ark were made, and I set them out, for my instruction and amusement : but real animals are not like toy animals. I believe that there is a reason for the life and the death, and the pleasures and the pains, of every creature : I am sure that this reason is out of the range of guessing. It is foolish, and worse than foolish, it is hypocritical, to allege that our food, sport, traffic, and clothing, are the final purpose for which the animals are here. What that final purpose is I do not know, nor does anybody. There must be one : but we cannot imagine what it is. Nothing in our lives explains it : nothing in philosophy, nothing in religion, nothing in common-sense. Let us limit ourselves to the wonder of pain in ourselves ; for we understand ourselves, or think that we do.

But who is able to look at the pain of all mankind ? Hold that Medusa-head away from you, and look only at its reflection in your own life. Each of us must get through his or her own pain,

between birth and death : must bear that much, no less and no more. You have your pain to bear, I have mine. Yours does not affect mine, nor mine affect yours. The pain of all of us does not increase the pain of each of us : your toothache is not made worse by the fact that two hundred million other people have, or had, or will have, the toothache. Get out of the habit of adding up separate lots of pain as if they were a column of figures on a sheet of paper. If "the grand total of pain among men" were twice what it is, your pain would not be doubled. If it were half what it is, your pain would not be halved. I know how hard it is to get out of this arithmetical schoolroom way of reckoning the pain in each life as an item which can be added to other similar items in other lives ; but you must not thus indulge your heart at the expense of your head. It is an error in logic, an artifice of sentiment : it lands you in a wrong idea of God's dealings with us : it gives an air of authority to the incessant argument, How can there be a God, when that awful shipwreck happened two days ago, and a hundred and fifty poor people were hurled into the sea ? and think of the pain in all the hospitals, and how can there be a God, when thousands and thousands of innocent children are suffering, who never did any harm to anybody ? Against this illogical argument, it is good to remember that none of us has more than the pain of one to bear : that *the mass of pain*

*in the world, the total amount of pain in the world*, are phrases, not sums : that a man, before he talks about the horror of a million lives in pain, must divide that pain by a million. Also, he must multiply his own pleasures by a million. If he charges on God the pain of a million lives, none more full of pain than his own, he is bound to praise God for a million lives, each as pleasant as his own. If he imagines pain *en masse*, he must admit the equal reality of pleasure *en masse* ; he must set-off against each spell of pain a spell of pleasure. If he insists on adding up all the toothaches in the world, he must acknowledge that the vast majority of teeth in the world are not aching. Let him count every weed in Life's garden, every speck of dirt in Life's house : the garden and the house are still there. Children, strong and happy, play on the lawns, and race along the terraces : lovers, in the garden, meet and kiss, while nobody is looking but the flowers, which are models of discretion : light and music, out from the windows of the great ball-room, fill the darkness and the silence. Among the house-party are hard-working men of affairs, artists, scholars, travellers : wise pure-minded women, good wives and good mothers : patient old people, who keep their tempers, and pay their debts, and weigh their words, and read their classics. Though a fool or two be of the party : though the garden be ill-kept : though the house be capable of improvement, more bath-

rooms, another sitting-room, a modern range in the vast kitchen—still, it is a fine house, replete with historical associations. Doubtless the house and the garden might be better : still, they might be worse.

So long as we bear it in mind, that the mass of human pain must be divided by the mass of humanity, we can see, in cases innumerable, the reasonableness of pain. All of us, time after time, have been helped by pain to enjoy pleasure, to avoid disease, to do the right thing, to have more courage, to learn more sympathy. But we cannot always find a reason for pain. That babies, dying, should have to suffer : that extreme old age should be plagued with infirmities : that pain should be intense in cases where nothing can be done for the sufferer—these and the like occasions are past our explaining ; the usefulness of pain in some cases does not prove that pain is useful in all cases. I find, in my own case, and you in yours, a reason for pain : and here, it seems to me, we have to stop. What lies beyond, is a matter of faith, not of explanation. It is not Faith's business to be an universal explainer : she has trouble enough without that. Hope and Charity go ahead ; she limps after them, so tired of looking at what she cannot see, listening to what she cannot hear. They two fare pleasantly ; there is always a welcome for them, and a seat at the table ; Hope tells such a good story, Charity



spends so much for the good of the place : but Faith, poor soul, cannot give a satisfactory account of herself, and must beg her way from door to door, while Hope and Charity are under shelter. When I think what she has to put up with, I am half inclined to say that she, after all, is the greatest of the three.

## VI

### THE WONDER OF DEATH

You cannot be a perfect gentleman, or a perfect lady, unless you think, from time to time, of your death. Put aside the common judgment that such thoughts are cowardly, sentimental, or unwholesome : for you may be sure, that they who give you this advice are looking where they tell you not to look. Yet, before you take this way of thinking, I advise you to study how a gentleman dies. Read and learn by heart the death of Hamlet. He had been courtier, soldier, scholar, the expectancy and rose of his kingdom. It was death in a trap, death by foul play : without reward, or attainment, or the love of woman. Follow, line by line, how he dies. After the amazing scene with young Osric, and a short passage of words with another nobody, comes the last quiet moment, his one chance of a word alone with a friend. Somehow, he guesses that he is going to die—*Thou would'st not think how ill all's here about my heart.* He rises, from the level, that we must all die, to the

height, that he will soon die. Most of us, I think, rehearse, in our day-dreams, the death-bed scene. We shall lie quite still, hardly able to see or to hear ; and So-and-so will be crying, and there will be a doctor, and a nurse, and flowers that will outlive us on a table at the bedside ; and prayers ; and perhaps the feeling on our lips of the consecrated bread and wine, if that much be left of sensation. We shall be too weak to do anything, but there will be nothing to be done ; we shall not be able to talk, but we shall not be wanting to talk ; we shall notice nothing, but not miss anything ; we shall desire nothing, and have all that we desire. We think of ourselves as in a condition of negative pressure. Out of us, as out of a bell-glass, life will be exhausted, and death let in with a rush. But in all such rehearsals we are playing not at death, but at dying : whereas Hamlet is thinking not of dying, but of death.

He sees in death a meaning : else he would not quote what Christ said of the fall of a sparrow. It is not mere chance, he says, that I shall die on this day, you on that day : and from this meaning he draws a moral, *The readiness is all*. Death is past finding out, no words for it, no idea of it : therefore we must be ready for it. Against the ordinary opinion, that we know nothing of death and therefore need not think of it, he puts his opinion, that we know nothing of death and therefore must think of it. The less there is to see, the more, he says, we

ought to look. That is what it is, to be a perfect gentleman, or lady.

Enter King, Queen, Laertes, everybody, except the girl whom he had loved. He must die, now, in that stupid and hateful crowd. We never rehearse that effect : we always think of ourselves as dying in bed. He makes his apology to Laertes : it is less a defence of himself than a benediction of Laertes. *I have been mad*, he says to him, and to the crowd. How else can he clear them out of his way, and get right up to death ? And how can he die, while the King lives ? Then the crowd falls back ; and the King, on the throne, leans forward, nearer, nearer, into the presence of divine vengeance. It is only a few lines, from the killing of the King to the death of Hamlet : learn them by heart, for the sake of their music :—

Exchange forgiveness with me . . . .

. . . . As thou art a man,

Give me the cup : let go : by Heaven, I'll have it—

Oh God, Horatio, what a wounded name,

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me . . . .

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

To tell my story . . . .

But I do prophesy the election lights

On Fortinbras ; he has my dying voice.

. . . . The rest is silence.

Compare this death with your rehearsal of your dying. Here was neither quiet, nor forgiveness, nor a peaceful end ; but violence, treachery, and all that we call a terrible end. He makes harmony of these discords, and radiance of this gloom ; and the



poisoned cup, at the last, glows like the cup of the Sangreal : such honour, courage, patriotism, and submission are in him. Then, *The rest is silence*, he says, and dies. It is not in him to say a word of hope : yet he shows you, and will show your children's children, how to die. The readiness is all : we must think of death. Without such thinking, no education is complete : once you are on the road toward wisdom you will find that it goes, here and there, by a graveyard. And as it is with a man, so it is with a nation. If we could weigh and measure what a nation thinks of death, we should be able to tell its fortune. They say that in Heaven there is a large map of the world : and a similar map is kept elsewhere, for reference. On these two maps, the nations are displayed in colour, according to the value of their opinions on subjects of national importance. These maps, of course, are quick with life : and the colours leap and fade in the strangest way. Always, that colour comes out for which you are consulting the map. Thus, on the occasion of a war, the opposed nations are of a certain colour, more or less brilliant in each of them, according as they think more or less nobly of war. Neither in war-time alone, but on every occasion of a crisis, you are able to judge, on the map, the righteousness or unrighteousness of the national mind ; and, of course, nations have other affairs to think of beside Death and War : such as Health, Wealth, Drink, Discipline,

and Politics. At the time of a general election, if you look at your own country, either in the heavenly map or in the reference copy, you see Veracity, which ought to be as vivid as the scarlet geraniums in front of Buckingham Palace, gone to a dreadful dull pink, like rouge.

Therefore it is of great importance to have good thoughts of our death : and they are not likely to come unless we make a habit of looking at that fixed point. If anybody says that you are trying to lift a veil, or to see what is hid from you, pay no heed to him or to her. There is no more veil, between me and my death, than between me and my dinner ; indeed, there is not so much : for I may be disappointed of my dinner, but am sure of my death. It has been, since my birth, the one event bound to happen to me, the one fact which steadily refuses to wear a veil : it presents itself naked to me. Therefore, I dislike the veils which Art throws over Death : I am hindered, not helped, by symbols, emblems, allegorical figures, pictures and statues of Death ; and would like to have them sold, and the money spent on Life. Imagine them put up to auction ; they would fetch a high price : let us have a catalogue of them :—

*Lot 1.*—Portrait of Death : by one of the greatest of all British artists. This fine portrait represents her in the prime of life. Three-quarters figure, standing, one of a group : robe of soft material : no wings : she carries some flowers in a fold of her robe.

*Lot 2.*—Portrait of Death : by the same artist : represents her in later life. Wings.

*Lot 3.*—Portrait of Death : by a well-known German artist. He is represented as a skeleton : long dark robe of a religious order ; cowl drawn over skull : he is playing a fiddle.

*Lot 4.*—Companion portrait : he is pulling a bell-rope.

*Lots 5 to 50.*—Portraits of Death, from the old bridge over the Reuss at Lucerne. Skeletons, in different attitudes, according to the company in which they find themselves. Robes of the period. Interesting to antiquarians : would be well suited for a Public Library.

*Lot 51.*—Fine statue of Death, from Westminster Abbey, by Roubillac : skeleton : no robe. He (? she) is coming out of a vault, and aiming a javelin at a lady. The rest of this group, by the express wish of the authorities, remains in the Abbey.

*Lot 52.*—Fine statue of Death, from St. Peter's. Same general treatment : a Pope instead of a lady. The rest of this group remains in St. Peter's, by the express wish of the authorities.

All such pictures and statues, even the best of them, tell us nothing, or less than nothing. There is a better way, in art, to represent Death : and that is, to represent the dead. And, to my thinking, they are best represented as dead. The old Greek

sepulchre-stones in the British Museum represent them as alive, still among their own people, just saying good-bye, just hesitating for one more touch of the hands, one more look round the room before they go away : gentle, impassive men and women, who hardly mind going. Our Christian sepulchre-stones also, for the most part, represent them as alive : kneeling at faldstools, Sir Richard and Dame Alethea, with a regiment of sons behind him, and a similar line of daughters behind her : or chiselled on a brass, the priest, in his vestments, holding the cup of the sacrament : or some captain of Marlborough's time, leaning on his elbow, very uncomfortable, in a cuirass and a full-bottomed wig : or, on some poor modern tombstone, a medallion portrait, exactly like, and how clever of them to catch the expression so well. I prefer to see the dead as dead : the shrouded figure of Donne in St. Paul's : effigies that rest with their hands by their sides, not trying to pray : the rigid body under a sheet, in the picture by Watts, more eloquent than his allegories : and, especially, those two gallant gentlemen who lie one in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and the other at Ravenna.

But, on the stage, is it wrong to introduce Death among the players ? I dare not say that : for I saw them act the *Alcestis*, long ago, at Bradfield College, and well remember Lawrence's noble rendering of the part. And I saw them act *Everyman*, and watched a wonderful actor of the Death of us all. Who that



saw him will ever forget him? The little restless way that he had with his feet, because he was tired of his work, yet could not leave off; and how he never looked at Everyman while he was talking to him; and his dry dull toneless voice; and his trick of tapping a little drum, just to pass the time while people were crying and thinking what could be done. Happily, the play had begun with a speech from no less a person than God Himself. He, it was evident, was in His Heaven. Death was *His beadle*, *His vengeance*; had a master, was under orders. The audience took heart again; they began to see a sort of nervousness in him, a touch of servility; he fidgeted like a pew-opener; he was too prosperous to need a bribe, not too proud to take one: he was dreadful, but, Heaven be praised, he was not God. Above the stage, behind the scenes, was the explanation of him. That is how Death ought to be set forth. A modern play, with God left out of it, if not by the author then by the censor, might present Death as a mild feminine figure in a soft grey robe, with well-covered ribs, and feathery wings, and a big bunch of lilies instead of that little drum. I cannot guess what was done in the time of Sophocles to meet the keen minds of a Greek audience; I only know that Lawrence made the part a thousand times more beautiful than some of our modern dramatists make Life, yet made it properly dreadful. And that is what it is. For

which reason, nothing shall induce me to see Maeterlinck's play, *The Blue Bird*: for I am told that it contains these words, *There is no Death*: whereas, there is. But the *Alcestis* is a Greek tragedy, wholly different from *Everyman*, which is a Christian morality-play. That first English audience, uncritical, unlettered, for whom it was written, were concerned not with any legend of heroic action, but with what happens to *Everyman*. On the boards and trestles, set in the inn-yard, because the strolling players had come, and it was market-day, some young fellow was acting their own *Life*: therefore, another of the company must act their own *Death*. A man must live, a man must die: and they paid their testers, and saw *Everyman* do both, just like themselves. But a third player must act their own *God*; and he must speak the prologue; and they must see him, uplifted above the rough stage, and visible beyond the ramshackle curtains, which are the stage and scenes of every life: and they must hear him ordering *Death* about his work. If nobody were to act *God*, the play would not be worth seeing; and the testers might be spent to more advantage in the front parlour of the inn. To that audience the play was real, because *God* was in it: that was just what made it so like what happens in real life. The British drama has advanced far from this kind of play: and we now talk of realism, when we mean real water, or

a real steam-engine, or a real flock of sheep on the stage. But the old way was the right way. I am sure that my death has a meaning, a purpose, a commission given to him, sealed orders put into his hands. Therefore, if I am to see him with my own eyes, on the stage, in his uniform, arresting my life, he must produce his warrant; and I have the right to ask to see his commanding officer.

Go, next time they are acting *Everyman*: be judge between it and the plays of your present London. But the play did not end with *Everyman's* descent into his grave. For, when he had gone down out of our sight, an angel appeared, who told us that *Everyman* had been forgiven, and was now in Heaven. So the play began and ended at one and the same high level, according to the advice of Hesiod (I think it was Hesiod): *Let us begin with God, and let us end with God.*

But many of us, as time goes on, cease to believe the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Let me advise you what you ought to do if that happens to you. If you can possibly help it, do not talk about your views. Be patient: you may change your mind again, before you die. Keep, in a quiet way, to the usual observances of your religion: be content to be conventional, be content to be inconsistent. Almost all of us arrive at these views: and some remain there, and some do not. Your duty is to wait. Possibly, nothing will come of your waiting: possibly, some-

thing. It may be, for you, a matter of holding on with patience, and of recognising what great evidences, authorities, and examples are on the side of this doctrine. And, whatever may come, or not come, of your long waiting, always be sure of one fact, that Death is a servant, having a Master over him : as the inscription at Zermatt says, over a man killed by an avalanche, *It is I, be not afraid*. Death beats his drum, this way and that, in the crowd of our lives ; he is doing what he was told : and I hope that I shall think thus of him when he comes to me. Only, he may come suddenly, without a note of warning, and I am gone. I must keep him in mind now, measure myself against him, get to know the look of him.

A man's business here is not with the fact that all men die, but with the fact that he will die. The adding-up of the deaths of others does not help me to estimate my own. We all do add up deaths in our minds ; we read of a colliery disaster, a battle, an earthquake : and at once we look to see how many were killed, and we add the misery of so many deaths to the misery of each, with a vague sense that each was made worse by all. Or we fall to thinking what a vast multitude of people die in a year of this or that disease, and half persuade ourselves that the total mortality somehow affects the individual case. We must clear our minds of this habit of adding up deaths. Each of us has one : and, for that, the readiness is all.



Those eighteen, on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, were long remembered in Jerusalem, because they died together. It may be easier for a man to die with others than to die apart : and, though he should die with others, he meets no death but his own. To that meeting he ought to give his thoughts now ; and I, mine. Thinking, I find myself wondering : not that I shall be dead, but that I am alive. It is my life which is the wonder, not my death. It is infinitely wonderful that here I am, out of millions of millions dead, and millions of millions unborn, here am I, neither the one nor the other, but alive, moving about the house. There is a name for the dead ; we call them *the majority*. It is a majority so overwhelming, that I could almost be scared at belonging to the minority, the mere handful of us in contrast to all who have had their turn or are waiting for it. Imagine an interminable queue of children, miles of them, all wanting to peep through a huge telescope ; one, at this moment of time, this point of the endless line, is just at the telescope ; and must go, for all are waiting for a look. That I am here at all, is a most amazing experience : and, in the light of the wonder of my life, I see my death as a most non-wonderful and commonplace affair. Though I were to die a violent death, yet I should die a natural death. Though I were to die a natural death, yet I should die “by the visitation of God.” In brief, I am here to die : and a fatal injury or

disease is provided for me as plainly as my health and strength.

I must wonder, it seems, at other deaths, I who cannot wonder at my own. Babies, myriads of them, gone like snow-flakes : boys and girls, full of joy and promise, gone : the man from his wife, and the woman from her man ; the waste of lives, made by the million—here is wonder enough, if it were logical, to murder thought. It is not logical : it is the old fallacy of adding-up deaths : I am committing the very mistake against which I warned you. My proper business is with my own case, my own death. I do not find my behaviour and my attainments so remarkable that they ought to be permanent on this crowded earth : neither do I go so far in the opposite direction as to compare my removal to a sentence of capital punishment. This fanciful notion has crossed my mind, that I have been a guest in the world, as in a great country-house. I was invited for a certain time. It has slipped away ; and, as I look back over it, I am conscious of many shortcomings, and feel that I ought to show, in some practical way, my regret for them. It would be different, if I had been the perfect guest, never rude, never selfish, never troublesome : but I cannot think thus of myself. Therefore, I must not outstay my welcome : I was asked to stay for a definite length of time, which is now at an end : and my only course is to take my leave. That is as it ought to be ; that is

the way of the house, and the wisdom of the Master of the house : and, as I say good-bye, I do not feel that my departure is altogether separable from my behaviour.

See how thought, trying to wonder at Death, cannot get past wondering at Life, at Self. Even at a funeral, you will find yourself still wondering at a life ; you can see nothing else, when the sun is full in your eyes. At a funeral, the man himself is still the object of your wonder : it is the wonder of Self, not of Death, which holds you irresolute between the past tense and the present. Is the man himself become nothing ? Did he go out, or is he, in some unimaginable eternity, going on ? Can all the evidences, facts, experiences, in philosophy, religion, and psychology, set aside the visible evidence that he is dead ? The slow wheels of my thoughts move heavily on this old road, thousands of years old ; it is not the sort of mind that can be hitched to a star. Only, at a funeral, I long to hear the Hallelujah Chorus ; for, though a man be dead, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth : and we have a right to hear that, in place of the Dead March from "Saul." Funeral services are for the living, not for the dead, who hears not a word, nor a note of the music. When it is my turn, may there be no hint, in words or in music, that my going was half so strange as my staying : no bewildered airs on the organ, like questions put and not answered : no

comparison of me to Saul: let my ashes, like a very poor offertory, mostly pennies, be used *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*, to say that the wonder of Death is nothing, compared to the wonder of Life; and the Kingdom of Death is nowhere, compared to the Kingdom of God.



## VII

### THE WONDER OF BEAUTY

Not long ago, I was in Regent's Park : and so was the Spring. Blue sky, pink almond-blossom, and green buds, were given away to all : and I had done nothing to deserve this treat. It is true that I had been chilled and fogged by a most unkind March : and I did feel that the Spring was bound to warm and air me, and to make me fairly comfortable. She had kept me waiting so long, while she was putting on her new gown : she could hardly say now that she was not at home. She was reviving all creatures, and might as well include me. But why do more ? Why not warm and air me like a dormouse, or a pair of sheets, and therewith be content ?

Mark now what she did. She made love to me : she downright courted me, as if I were the only man in the world. It sounds incredible : for the Park was crowded with other people, not less attractive than myself. She did not mind that : she singled me out, cried to me to stop, ran after me, took my ugly face between her dear hands, and kissed me full

on the lips. Think of me : think of her. All that she had, she gave to me. For my sake, she had woven light and air into a veil, set the almond-blossom against the sky, and covered the hedges with shining buds : she had even remembered to put the amethysts on the dwarf rhododendrons at the lower right-hand corner of the Broad Walk, just to please me. To the rest of us, she was equally kind ; she made love to us all. But the point is, that she made it to me ; and would have made it none the less, if I had been the only man there : indeed, she would have made it all the more. What is the meaning of her passion for me, her pursuit of me, me of all men ? She flung herself at my head, and her treasures at my feet. Who am I, that she was thus prodigal ? I had asked only for warmth and fresh air : and I was caught up into Heaven. What does it all mean ? Am I God, that Spring should thus work miracles in my name, and give her Kingdom to me ?

The fool here leaves his uneasy place in the Psalms, and offers to explain what happened in the Park. It was, he says, the result of your environment, acting on your psychical faculties. Fool, say I, proceed : I am deeply interested, and I seek the truth at any price. Well, says he, something, in the Park, was impinging on something in your nervous system, which wasn't there : and it went on impinging, till what wasn't there was there. Your environment created, in your subliminal con-

sciousness, a definite series of co-ordinated associations : and that is why you thought the Park beautiful. Fool, say I, this explanation, for a thousand reasons, is ridiculous. Parks are not capable of creating a series of any kind. Besides, it was not a series : it was a blend, of my own making, a most supra-liminal blend. Besides, I did not think the Park beautiful : I tell you, it was beautiful. Besides, I am sure that I was impinging on the Park, not only the Park on me ; for I could feel myself doing it : and I should not have been in the Park, if the Park had not been in me. Well, says he, I cannot argue with a bigger fool than myself. So he goes away : and I fall to wondering at the eternal fact of the beauty of the world.

Let us be agreed, to begin with, that the beauty of Things is not impaired, nor touched, by the ugliness of Things. You cannot play off the one against the other ; you cannot call fogs as witnesses that the evidence of fine days is not to be believed : no such covenant or contract is between you and the Nature of Things. Foul weather, horrid smells, brutal discords, no more discredit the world's beauty than a bad sixpence debases the good coins in your pocket. You thought that you had sixpence more than you had : well, you were wrong, but the other coins are none the worse for that. Ugliness is not catching. Some people talk as if it were a sort of contagion, which might run through a whole gallery of pictures.

*There was a lot of rubbish*, they say, and seem to fear that the good pictures may be sickening for an attack of that malady. Among these most unhappy people, ugliness counts as infectious : it spreads, and is *contagium vivum*. They keep this nonsense at the back of their minds ; you do not find it looking out of the drawing-room windows : but they do admit, front or back, into their house of life, this false notion, that the world's ugliness infects the world's beauty. They might as well believe that a bad sixpence is able to corrupt a good half-crown, or that the Temple-Bar gryphon has a harmful effect on the dome of St. Paul's.

To prove that ugliness is not catching, I have just made a simple experiment, requiring no expensive apparatus. I took two Things, one ugly, the other beautiful, and put them side by side : an old top-hat, and a photograph of a fragment of Greek sculpture. I looked and waited : nothing happened. The top-hat was ugly enough to blast every statue in the Vatican. The photograph showed Aphrodite rising from the sea, upheld by attendant nymphs. She went on rising : with head thrown back, eyes wide open in surprise, nostrils dilated in deep breathing, hair wet and heavy with sea-water, and thin robe clinging to her skin. She had been beautiful for two thousand four hundred years. The malignant surface and absurd shape of the hat wrought no change in her : for I have just been to look at her



again, and she is as beautiful as ever. You could not have more final proof that ugliness is not catching.

Further, let us be agreed, that an ugly thing may be perfect for its use and place in the world. Take, for instance, an ugly teapot. It keeps its ill looks to itself: and it makes and pours out the tea in a manner which leaves nothing to be desired. What more could the added gift of beauty do for this teapot? Neither the tea, nor the pot, would be the better for it. The question is, Should we?

I am sure that I should not: and I would sooner be out of this world than at the mercy of the charms of every passing teapot. Once all teapots were made beautiful, give me a grave. The monotony of unrelieved delight, the loss of contrast and of rarity, would make this world no place for a gentleman: bury me deep, if you please, out of reach of Omnipresent Art.

Things on earth, says Plato, have their types, or ideas, laid up in Heaven. We get the copies, and God keeps the original. As we are men, so the type of all men is in Heaven: as we have laws, so the type of all law is in Heaven: and as we have teapots, so the type of all teapots is in Heaven. On earth we have them of all shapes and sizes, plain or fancy, clay or china, plated or silver, made in England or made in Germany. They have nothing in common but the one fact that each of them is a

teapot, a copy of that heavenly type which is neither plain nor fancy, clay nor china, plated nor silver, British nor foreign : which is, in brief, the Being of a teapot. Now, for a teapot to Be a teapot, it must have those characters which we call essential, or necessary to its Being. A teapot would not Be a teapot, if it were spoutless, or lidless, or soluble in hot water, or too heavy to lift, or solid instead of hollow : it would be something else. Capacity, resistance to hot water, and utility, are inseparable from its Being. Therefore these attributes are represented and prefigured, somehow, in the heavenly original : they are in the idea of every teapot. But the style, decoration, and personal appearance of this or that earthly copy are not in the original. There is one type of all teapots, not one for each teapot, but one type of what every teapot must Be : and, to my thinking, a squat sixpenny brown clay teapot, holding three cups, is not far from that original which, says Plato, is in Heaven. I dare to say, also, that a highly adorned, elaborate, fragile, expensive teapot, which I cannot without rebuke put on the top bar of the grate, has gone far from the Platonic idea : and they have gone furthest, which dribble, and let the leaves through, and have handles that get hot and lids that fall into the cup in the act of pouring out. Though such an one were of pure gold, I would not have it, save to pawn. For, as the Christian Scientist said of the hen that ate its

own eggs, *It could not be God's idea, that the hen should eat its own eggs ; it was something like what sin is in us*, so a golden teapot is false to the idea of a teapot. She treated the hen, she told me, successfully, by fixing her own mind on God's idea of what a hen ought to Be : but who shall treat a teapot for disobedience to the heavenly type ?

It is easy to see, now, why Plato says that the Useful is the Beautiful. We have the same thought in the proverb, *Handsome is as Handsome does*. Things that work well are called, for that reason, ideal : we hear of ideal kitchen-ranges, type-writers, feeding-bottles. They are so useful that they have as much beauty as they need, and would be none the better for more. Beauty out of place is not beautiful. Consider the want of all beauty in wings, breasts, whole birds, on ladies' hats : Reynolds' cherubs, Raphael's Madonna, on silver-backed hair-brushes ; certain names of Colleges, shouted by the crowd running with the boats ; the overture to Lohengrin on a harmonium ; Athene over the portico of the Athenæum ; flowers, no room for them on the coffin, but shove them into a fly behind the hearse ; and the words *Lacrimæ Christi* on a jolly bottle of wine. Again, carved penholders, enamelled matchboxes, and muffin-covers made of hammered silver with crystal knobs, are not beautiful : neither are such articles as surprise us, pretending to be rabbits and golf-balls, whereas they are full of chocolates or of ink :

neither are dead creatures stuffed into a likeness of life, and simple utensils distorted into elaborate shapes. Of ten bits of household furniture, nine are not intended to be beautiful, they are only intended to be useful. The perfect feeding-bottle is not made of hammered silver : it is made of glass, which is cheap, and easily sterilised by boiling.

Here we have got the beginnings of a creed. I believe in the beauty of the world, and that it is directly adjusted and addressed to me : that it cannot be explained by jargon of psychology : that it is not touched by the ugliness of the world : and that Things intended only to be useful may be, and are, perfectly perfect without it. Indeed, all the best beauty in the world is practically useless : and this uselessness tends to prove its divinity, if that plain fact wants any proof. We have an instance, how Things useless may yet be divine. This instance is pure mathematics. They are divine, eternal in the Heavens, not in time or in space, but one and the same alike in God and man. So are applied mathematics. All arithmetic, all sums, accounts, and measurements, are Heaven on earth : and the angels, when they want a multiplication-table, use ours. But applied mathematics are useful, whereas pure mathematics are useless : that is the way of them, to be of no use to anybody. And pure beauty, like pure mathematics, is useless ; and, like them, is none the worse for that. Further, as all mathematics are the same mathematics, whether



they be pure, as in professors, or applied, as in accountancy ; so all beauty is the same, whether it be pure, as in a sunset, or applied, as in the carving round a gateway. Nothing is more impossible, than to seek to explain beauty in terms of utility. The common argument is, that the plumage of birds, the colours of insects, and the like, are attractive or provocative to sex : therefore, by a process of development, our belief in beauty has been founded and built, in us, on appetite or desire. Really, you might as well try to explain the beauty of Venice by saying that it has been founded and built on piles driven into mud. The piles and the mud support the Doges' Palace, but they have less than nothing to do with its beauty. The vibrations of an orchestra account for the sound of the music, not for the beauty of the music. Sulphate of copper accounts for the blue of a solution of that salt, not for the beauty of the blue.

To feel the wonder of beauty, we must enjoy the very elements of beauty. There is no call for us to be musical or artistic. People are so stupid : they love to drag us up to a symphony by Beethoven, or a picture by Titian, and say *There, isn't that beautiful !* They dare to speak of it as *that*. Why, a single note on a violin, a single square inch of a soap-bubble, are beautiful. It happens to all of us, now and again, to be reminded that every atom of beauty is completely beautiful. You are listening to somebody

singing ; a thousand beauties are in the words, the melody, the accompaniment, and nine out of ten of them are lost on you : and then, of a sudden, one note of the voice seems to capture all possible beauty of music, and to pour it all into you, more than you can hold ; just one note of her voice. Or you are walking down Bond Street, looking into the shop-windows ; and a diamond, or a flower, or a bit of old silver, or a yard of brocade, is enough, if you are willing to feel the wonder of beauty ; enough and more than enough, to fill you to the brim with admiration.

Therefore, stick to the simplest manifestations of beauty ; give, to any scrap of colour or of sound, all that you have to give ; let every meanest accident of beauty exercise and strengthen your power of wondering. If you cannot enjoy the colour of a fragment of stained glass, nor a tune gently and accurately played with one finger on the piano, you are neither artistic nor musical. Set yourself, as a matter of duty, as an affair between you and your God, against the inflated notion that you ought to be admiring great final works of art, Symphonies and Holy Families, nothing less. The true lover of music and of pictures is he or she who gets unfathomable pleasure out of a single note of sound, a single patch of colour. I am justly proud of enjoying Beethoven and Rembrandt : but I am far prouder that I can enjoy one moment in a blackbird's whistling, one

glimpse of the radiance of a mother-of-pearl button. It is a blessing, to be able to admire the Great Masters : it is even more of a blessing to be able to admire, in a shop-window, what ladies call a dress-length. Let me commend to you, for your profound wonder, the beauty of that cheap silver gauze which one finds, at a feast, in the middle of the dinner-table : out of such waves of white and silver Aphrodite, Goddess of Beauty, rose, and still rises. Do not be in a hurry to admire Westminster Abbey and the contents of the National Gallery : they can wait till you have exhausted the wonder of the beauty of dark thatch over a whitewashed cottage, and the play of colours in a remnant of shot silk, or in the burning of a log of ship-timber. I am not urging you to be an "æsthete" : I am telling you the plain truth, that the odds and ends of beauty are immeasurably beautiful. The wonder of their beauty is inexhaustible, and may rightly be called divine : and, if you cannot be amazed at the film of pearl inside an oyster-shell, I do not care to hear what you think of the French Cathedrals.

By these instances, which you can multiply a thousandfold for yourself, judge the absurdity of all attempts to explain beauty in terms of evolution. Take the colours of butterflies' wings. It is, of course, a fact that these colours render Monsieur and Madame Butterfly attractive each to the other. It is a charming fact : but it has no bearing on our impartial

admiration of both of them. The colouring of a Red Admiral gives me great pleasure ; and, so soon as I begin to think, this pleasure turns to wonder that the Red Admiral is so beautiful. And this wonder is not diminished, when some idiotic young naturalist has pinched the life out of him and pinned him on cork. His beauty, to me, is utterly inexplicable, utterly extravagant : it was useful to him, it is useless to me : it helped him to a mate as fair as himself, but I am sure that she was not in a state of mind to appreciate it : she never admired him in life as I admire him now : it takes me, properly to enjoy his amazing beauty, and even I cannot do it as it ought to be done. Poets like Blake and Tennyson, artists like Rossetti and Holman Hunt, did it better : the thing still remains to be done to perfection. The Red Admiral is not yet admired as he deserves. Angels might get further than poets and artists, if I were in a position to affirm that angels are more than an article of belief : but I only say that, on earth, the colours of a butterfly's wing are still waiting for a really competent admirer, after all these millions of butterflies. We think that we are doing it so well : that is our narrow-minded self-complacency.

Now, if I cannot do full justice to the beauty of the colours of a butterfly, I ask you, Is it likely that I could do full justice to the beauty of Regent's Park in spring-time ?



Always, if we will be honest with ourselves, we are conscious, in the presence of beauty, of our own feebleness : or, if we are not, we ought to be. Kind elders, beginning at the wrong end, assure us that we need only patience, only education : attend a sufficient number of concerts, and you will understand the beauty of music : attend lectures and exhibitions and galleries, and you will understand the beauty of pictures. Whereas, if Beethoven and Titian were living, they would tell us that they, even they, never attained clear vision, perfect sight of the fullness of the beauty of music and pictures : always they felt that there was more to be heard and seen than they heard and saw. They were like the Queen of Sheba, the half was not told them : beyond their highest sense of beauty, there was higher beauty to which they were insensible : beyond their all, there was more : they were only expressing, so far as they could, what was beyond their power of expression.

Well, if education is to help us, let us begin at the right end. Let us institute, for schools and colleges, wonder-classes. A single note of music, a single patch of colour, shall suffice for an hour's lesson. If the class find it dull, so are other lessons frequently dull. If a student rebels, as students will, and says it is a waste of time to look for an hour at the inside of an oyster-shell, what of that? I have heard lectures on Greek philosophy, counter-point, Gothic architecture, and the French Revolution, all of them

called a waste of time : it proves nothing, to call a lesson dull. When the class has mastered, thoroughly mastered and learned by heart, the wonder of the beauty of an oyster-shell, then, and not till then, they may proceed to the beauty of a Red Admiral on a bit of cork.

This sense, that one is not up to the beauty of the least odds and ends of beauty, is in no way vague or imaginative : it is just as positive to me as the fact that I am ignorant of Hebrew. I am quite sure, that, if I were other than I am, these odds and ends would be even more beautiful to me : and I am quite sure that no artist, no poet, has ever been able to feel their beauty so completely that none could feel it more completely. In brief, the phrase *Absolute Beauty* does seem to be somehow excused by the plain facts of daily experience.

However that may be, we do know, that our world, for our sake, puts itself to the trouble of being immeasurably and everlastingly beautiful.

Now comes a whole row of points. This beauty is in us, not in Things : there can no more be beauty in sounds or in colours than there can be pain in a pin, or pleasure in a hot-water bottle : the beauty of the world is in us, every note of its music, every scrap of its colour. And all this incessant blaze and riot of a million beauties is useless to us, who alone on earth enjoy the glory of it and the wonder. And we, in whom it is, yet are conscious, always, and most

conscious when we are at our best, that it, somehow, is better than we are : that, beyond all the beauty that we can receive into ourselves, there is more perfect beauty, which we cannot receive, neither by education, nor even by wonder. And this beauty comes of mere shreds and patches of our belongings, a yard of riband, a bit of broken glass, a single note of the voice or the piano. There is no end to it either way, neither in the height nor in the depth : we find it everywhere, and, wherever we find it, there we have put it, and are taking it out again : and, always, it turns out far more beautiful than we thought, and beautiful beyond the range of our perception.

Come back to the instance of the sunset over the moor. Some fifty pages ago, you were lying on your back among the heather, watching the sunset. You made the colours of it : you really did, as if you were God. And you made the beauty of it—ah, did you really do that ? You found it, you read it, as one reads, from a line of type, a line of Shakespeare. But did you really make it ? No, not you : in spite of all that I have been saying, there is a limit even to logic. The beauty of the world is made not by us but in us. On earth, we have the copy : but the original, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is where Plato said that it is, laid up in Heaven. And it matters nothing to me, that I cannot understand what he said : for I cannot even understand why the inside of an oyster-

shell is beautiful. Here, here, at the last, is a card in Faith's hand that you will never beat. Down with your cards on the table : she has won, and be glad of that. Against all your play, she wins, because she has compelled you to admit the omnipresent beauty of this world, and the wonder of all this useless beauty, created not by us, but in us ; greater than we are, yet addressed to us, and to us above all the creatures of God.



## VIII

### THE USE OF WONDER

IT is an old half-truth, that Man is a poor creature : and, to do him justice, he is the first to take this view of his predicament. In his chief books on the subject, you find him saying clearly that he is not what he ought to be. The poets, alike in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and modern languages, though they praise his great ability and mighty works, yet feel, through all their lauds and glorias, like a cloud across the sun, that he is not worth all that music. They cannot define his level ; they now exalt him, now cast him down. He sets himself to be at home with the apes, and immediately the angels invite him to be of their company : he makes himself at home with the angels, and immediately the apes call him back to the top of the tree. You might arrange, from the poets, two anthologies, of the praise and the dispraise of man ; and might ask yourself, and get no answer, how one and the same species can be so variable. But you may find, in a single poem, both sides of man's case. Here

is the famous passage from Pope's Essay on Man :—

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan ;  
The proper study of mankind is man.  
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,  
A being darkly wise, and rudely great,  
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,  
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,  
He hangs between ; in doubt to act, or rest ;  
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast ;  
In doubt his mind, or body, to prefer ;  
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err :  
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little, or too much :  
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused ;  
Still by himself abused, or disabused ;  
Created half to rise, and half to fall ;  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all ;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled ;  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.

Forgive me, but you are too young to care for Pope : you take more pleasure in a poet of your own day, all honour to him. You love to see, by words that flash like lightning, man at work, at hard work, in which God suddenly is there, and the *vexilla Regis* go forward, as it were to bugles calling, and the drums of the fore and aft. Man is plodding in the furrows, or buying and selling in the bazaar, or holding-on through a storm at sea, or picking-off his country's enemies with a rifle, or flying on the wings of an aëroplane ; and the field, the shop, the sea, the war, the motor, all are God's act and deed : where

man is, there is his Maker. You have no great regard for academic estimates of man apart from his Maker. Well then, here is another bit of the Essay on Man : and I think that Heraclitus himself might have written it :—

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul ;  
That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,  
Great in the earth as in th' ethereal frame,  
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,  
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees ;  
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.

You cannot afford to take these lines with amusement, nor to call them artificial, as if poetry ought always to be strumming on our emotions, with the loud pedal down, and herself all untidy ; whereas, the finest brocade is not good enough to make her a gown, nor the rarest marbles to build her a house, and she cannot be too fastidious, in her station in life. That is why Pope's poetry is so delightful, because she is such a lady. She is dressed in the height of fashion, but her close-fitting rhyme and rhythm do not impede the grace of her movements : she sings always in time and in tune, pronouncing every word clearly, phrasing every bar perfectly, whether her song be of beaux and belles, or of deity : and she is able, without thumping, to get real tunes, pure as Mozart, out of those jangled old cottage-pianos

which we call our hearts. Have you never read Pope's "Universal Prayer"? You will find it hard to better his instruction :—

What blessings Thy free bounty gives,  
Let me not cast away ;  
For God is paid when man receives :  
To enjoy is to obey . . .  
Mean though I am, not wholly so,  
Since quickened by Thy breath,  
Oh, lead me whereso'er I go,  
Through this day's life or death.

In these days of socialism, I advise you not to lose out of your religion this note of individualism. Faith, after all, is mainly a personal matter : not even man and wife can be sure of getting there arm in arm. I must go by myself, if I go at all. Therefore, to begin with, I must learn myself : the proper study for me is I, not Man in general, with a capital letter, but this man in particular : I must carefully observe me, on whom alone I am an authority. So soon as I go further afield, I begin to be in danger of error. I am set in a little ring of lives, which I can touch by just putting out my hand ; it is my own people, my nearest friends, and I say that I know them : but I do not know them as I know myself. Again and again, between them and me, hopes and fears, and prophecies of good or ill, have come to nothing : I am still able, after all these years, to be surprised at them, and they at me ; to be wrong about them,



and they about me. How is it possible, that I should be able to understand lives more remote than these? It is foolish, to think that we are judges of character, having insight into humanity: such powers of divination, if ever they come to us, come, late in life, to them, and to them alone, who all their lives have judged themselves and looked into themselves. I must begin, it is plain, with the wonder of myself. Till I have learned me, it would be unwise to go further. I must begin just here, stop here for a time, dream here, with my head on the hard fact that I am I, if my dream is to include a glimpse of a ladder up to Heaven.

Well, that is what I have been trying to do: and, now that I am near the end of what I had to say, let us look back, you and I. It all started in that sentence in the marriage-service, about Things being made out of nothing. We took some trouble to clean the dust off this-genuine old statement; and, as a picture, carefully cleaned, may turn out to be after all a valuable old master, so we were rewarded by the discovery of this valuable truth, that colour, smell, and sound, are not in Things, but in us. At once, we found ourselves, or you did, for I am accustomed to it, in a new sort of world, colourless, odourless, noiseless; a world of hidden Things-in-themselves, hidden, as in a children's game, for us to find them: each of us was making his or her share of the universe, or so it seemed, out of a world

invisible. Then we advanced, from the wonder of Matter, to the wonder of Nature, the wonder of the adjustment between God, Matter, and Self ; and at this point, to my thinking, we were pulled up short by the difficulty of assigning to Nature a kingdom separate from these three kingdoms : but we were able to regard it as a very wonderful experience, that you and I are here at all. Therefore we began to wonder at Self, and at the problem of Space and Time ; and, hardest of all, we tried to understand that endless war which is between the belief in Self as Thought, and the belief in Self as Thing : and here the phrases *I will* and *I will not* came into the argument, and distracted our attention. So we advanced, from the wonder of consciousness, to the wonder of conscience ; rising from the ground into the air of ethics, to the wonder of Pain, and the wonder of Death. And then, it occurred to us that we may well take, as our guide toward a wise faith, the wonder of Beauty ; for it is, of all the proofs of God, one of the most sure.

That is how these little essays came to be written, and fell into shape and place : and, as my Lady Science might say, they are true, whether you believe them or not. But I have named only a few of the many objects of Wonder : and I have said nothing of the wonder of Evil. It leads right away from faith, straight as an old Roman road : to look toward evil is to turn the back on faith. You

cannot find, in the facts of drink, murder, brutal insolence, cowardly selfishness, any sort or kind of consolation : you cannot, by mere wonder, mere looking at them, find anything but the dark. There they are ; look till your eyes ache, wonder yourself crazy, you learn nothing : try to console yourself with Shakespeare and Tennyson, and their protestations ring false. You cannot rest in the comfortable assurance that good comes out of evil : it only comes out because it could not stop in. Cover all the walls of your heart with pious Bible texts ; the fact remains, and mocks at you and your holy books, that the wonder of evil is unlike all other wonder, giving no hint of any purpose, meaning, or explanation, and having none to give.

If you like to apply the name of Evil to all such minor plagues of life as a headache, or the loss of a pleasure, or the unkindness of a friend, nobody will contradict you : but I venture to advise you to keep this word for great occasions. Do not be put off with Shakespeare's phrase about a soul of goodness in things evil : keep the word for that soul of badness, outside things good, which we recognise in experience, but find utterly unintelligible. The wonder of evil, if you limit yourself to wondering, leads you to the grave where Faith and Hope and Charity are buried side by side, without so much as a head-stone over them ; it is that way madness lies. Evil has one thing, and no more, to say to us :

*Will you fight?* Oh, the ugly bully, so much bigger and stronger than we are, the great beast. In the name of God, off with your coat, and up with your fists. Of course, he will beat you, the brute : still, you may get home on him, once or twice. You may? No, you will. Then, wash the blood off your face, and give thanks to Heaven as best you can : and fight him again. See, even the wonder of evil is not so mad as it looks. From the beginning of our world, it has challenged men, after the provoking method of Goliath of Gath. To sit wondering at evil, as a matter of contemplative thought, is sheer stupidity, and worse. To fight, is the very act and presence of God. And I am told, on good authority, that they who make a habit of it do, in the long run, score.

Look which way you will, up and down the streets of the city of the mind, you find everywhere the use of Wonder. It helps you, if not to understand, yet to have some faint idea of the meaning of our being here. It does, I can hardly say how, but it does lead us toward a sane, true, and proper vision of that adjustment between God and man in which we live and move. It is individualist, yet unselfish : it is logical, yet not dull : it is imaginative, yet not fantastical. Follow the way of Wonder : for it sets our faces toward Wisdom.

But, as I said, I have not exhausted the subject. For, a few evenings ago, I heard a young man singing



a love-song : and, as it often happens that a single note in a song may capture the whole beauty of music, and the wonder thereof, and pour it all into the nearest heart, filling it to the brim, so it happened now, while this young man was singing. Such a silly thing to happen, purely physical : still, it did happen. And, when that note achieved that miracle, somebody, and there is no need to mention names, said just the right thing to me : *You ought to add a chapter*, she said, *on the wonder of Love*. And I should like to do that, if I could ; but it would have to be a very long chapter. It would begin, I suppose, at the level of the mating of insects, and would ascend, without a break, to the love of a beast for its young, the love of a mother for her baby, the love of a man for a maid. At that level, thought would have to find wings, and go Eastward, to the *holy fields*, as Shakespeare's King Henry IV calls them—

Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,  
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our advantage on the bitter cross.

Therefore, you must write this chapter for yourself. None, to my thinking, can write it for another : it must be written, not in words, but in daily life.



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